



FEMA

Texas Severe Storms TX-4332-DR *Media Analysis Report/Morning Edition* *September 20, 2017*

Hot Issues

- None

News Clips Analysis/Trends

- Housing concerns continue to dominate both print and broadcast stories. In a **FEMA** Town Hall meeting in Gregory survivors addressed their concerns about housing. Travel-trailers and RV's as housing options were discussed. A widely distributed story reports that one housing option off the table for Harvey survivors is trailers.
- There was coverage of a number of **FEMA** Town Hall meetings with the Bevil Oaks meeting the most noteworthy. Displaced residents voiced their frustration with FEMA and the city of Bevil Oaks in a KFDM-TV report. Continued coverage of survivor frustration waiting for help from **FEMA**.
- A Texas Tribune report focuses on the amount of federal aid Texas has received for Hurricane Harvey recovery and how **FEMA** is distributing it; **FEMA** statistics included.
- Coverage of health concerns in Harvey's aftermath have been steady. Stories focus on how dirt and debris left behind by floodwaters could pose health hazards.
- Continued coverage of Hurricane Irma and its damage as well as stories focusing on Hurricane Maria as it barrels toward Puerto Rico.

Social Media Analysis

Hurricane Harvey – Social Listening Report – 9/20/17 – 0800 CST

Compiled by: Scott Reuter, Bree Constance Huffin

This report is being distributed to the 4332 Joint Field Office, FEMA External Affairs at Headquarters and Region 6, FEMA Office of Response and Recovery, Red Cross, USCG, and HHS/ASPR.

This report compiled by Julie Foster, Julie.Foster@fema.dhs.gov

Summary

Social media activity is high, with consistently negative posts and comments, largely based on survivor frustrations with FEMA help line wait times, and perceived long wait times for assistance funds. Even though there are mostly negative sentiment posts on the official Facebook pages, there are a significant amount of shares of helpful information such as DRC openings, and responses by FEMA to the questions and concerns being posted there are receiving some positive feedback.

Summary of Coverage

- Three Disaster Recovery Centers to open in Bastrop and Harris counties
- Disaster Recovery Centers open in Orange, Houston, Bay City, and Brookshire
- List of Disaster Recovery Centers operating in Houston area
- Bevil Oaks residents pack meeting and demand answers from FEMA
- Pearland to host disaster recovery workshop and two town halls with FEMA
- FEMA town hall meeting set for Aransas Pass
- Harvey-displaced HUD assisted housing renters may be eligible for FEMA aid
- A rundown on how FEMA distributes Harvey funds to the state of Texas
- Harvey and Irma survivors face tough questions on whether to rebuild
- A rundown on how FEMA distributes Harvey funds to the state of Texas
- Free services and resources available to Houston-area Harvey survivors
- Dirt and debris left from floodwaters could pose a health risk
- Harvey-damaged wastewater plants cause raw sewage spill in Houston area
- Public health impact of pollution left in Harvey's wake comes into focus.
- FEMA faces third major disaster relief effort as Hurricane Maria takes aim at the Caribbean
- Hurricane Maria plows over Dominica headed for Puerto Rico
- FEMA frustrations build for one displaced Dickinson family
- Road to recovery presents new challenges for Houston's poor
- Immigrant hurricane survivors afraid of deportation turn to church for relief
- Dickinson slowly picking up and getting back to normal after Harvey
- Hard hit Rose City hard up for water and shelter
- Hurricane evacuee from Orange finds new home on higher ground
- Beaumont landmarks and recreational sites ruined by flooding
- Travel-trailers and RV's being considered as housing options for flood survivors
- FEMA ruling out trailers as housing options for Harvey survivors
- Houston Senior Living Center residents ordered to evacuate flood-damaged building
- Harvey-flooded homes in Port Arthur will have to be reconstructed
- Texas residents relying on updated FEMA flood maps for guidance
- FEMA flood maps missed 75% of Houston flood damage study shows
- Mormon Helping Hands head to Houston to help in Harvey recovery
- Clint Black headlines benefit concert for Hurricane Harvey survivors
- Displaced pets and owners reunite at Houston's NRG Arena
- Beaumont woman reunites with cat
- Opinion: Disdain for experts could bring more disasters
- Opinion: Congress should fix flood insurance this year

- Social Media

Notable Quotes

“These people won’t contact you. They say three days on the phone, then you call them and there’s no answer. It’s been 21 days, and I still don’t have an answer.” – Tim Meade, Dickinson resident

“The water was in the neighborhood for three days, and she (Herrera) can’t recover from that, not right away. I’m glad neighbors can help, and [that] churches are reaching out. I just hope we can keep finding people who can help. She and her family have a long road ahead.” – Maria Molina, Houston resident

“Some had E. Coli which is an indicator of sewage, levels were very high in certain areas and less and some but we had them everywhere.” –Dr. Winifred Hamilton, Baylor College of Medicine

“There isn’t a way to measure what the ambient exposure would be for a community, but we do know anecdotally that people are smelling these chemicals and being exposed to them.” –Luke Metzger, Environment Texas Dir.

"To my knowledge, there's one house that didn't get water, it's built up on stilts. Ninety-nine percent of Rose City is gone." – Bonnie Stephenson, Rose City Mayor

Headlines

[Disaster recovery centers to open in Bastrop, Harris counties](#)

[Disaster Recovery Centers to Open in Four Counties](#)

[New FEMA recovery centers opening on Sept. 20](#)

[Bevil Oaks residents demanding answers from FEMA as expenses mount](#)

[Pearland to host disaster recovery workshop, townhall for residents affected by Hurricane Harvey on Sept. 22](#)

[Farenthold to lead town hall meeting](#)

[If you received HUD assistance before Harvey, you may be eligible for FEMA help](#)

[Hey, Texplainer: How Is FEMA Distributing Money To Areas Hit By Harvey?](#)

[Homeowners In Flood-prone Areas Face Tough Questions Over Whether To Rebuild](#)

[Free services, resources for Houston-area victims of Harvey](#)

[Debris piles, sediment pose health risks](#)

[Raw Sewage Spilled In Houston Area After Wastewater Plants Damaged By Harvey](#)

[Harvey’s Toll On Air, Water Emerges](#)

[FEMA Faces Third Major Disaster Relief Effort As Hurricane Maria Takes](#)

[Hurricane Maria Path Over Dominica, Heads To Puerto Rico, Category 5 Storm](#)

[Social Media](#)

Recovery

[FEMA Frustrations Build As Displaced Await Answers](#)

[Can Houston Find Path To Recovery That Doesn’t Leave Poor Behind?](#)

[Immigrant hurricane victims turn to churches amid fear](#)

[Dickinson Slowly Recovers From Hurricane Harvey](#)

[Water, shelter scarce for Rose City residents](#)
[Hurricane evacuee from Orange now calls Nacogdoches home](#)
[Local landmarks, recreational sites wrecked by water](#)

Housing

[State may consider RVs, travel-trailers to house Harvey victims](#)
[FEMA No Longer Depending on Trailers to House Flood Victims](#)
[Senior living center residents ordered to evacuate](#)
[Older houses may need to be reconstructed](#)

NFIP and Flood Maps

[Hurricane Harvey Shines New Light On Updated FEMA Flood Maps](#)
[Study Finds FEMA Flood Maps Missed 75% Of Houston Flood Damage Claims Between 1999 And 2009](#)

Volunteers/Donations/Charities

[An army of locals aid in Harvey recovery efforts](#)
[Clint Black, Don Henley, Lyle Lovett to Headline Hurricane Harvey Benefit in Texas](#)

Displaced Animals

[Lost your pet? 'Pet Reunion Pavilion' reuniting pets and owners at NRG Arena](#)

Opinion

[Disdain For Experts Could Bring More Disasters](#)
[Congress Can Fix Flood Insurance This Year](#)

Stories

[Disaster recovery centers to open in Bastrop, Harris counties](#)

[KXAN-TV, Austin, TX](#)

By Kate Winkle

September 19, 2017

AUSTIN — A Disaster Recovery Center will open in Bastrop County Wednesday, along with two others in Harris County.

The State of Texas/Federal Emergency Management Agency centers will provide in-person support to individuals and businesses reeling after Hurricane Harvey swept through, bringing with it damage and flooding. Representatives from FEMA, the U.S. Small Business Association, the state and other agencies will be at the centers.

People can get help on filing aid applications and get questions answered. If possible, officials recommend people register with FEMA before visiting the center, which they can do by going to [DisasterAssistance.gov](https://www.disasterassistance.gov), calling 800-621-3362 or downloading the FEMA app.

The recovery center in Bastrop is located at the Bastrop County Justice of the Peace at 404 Fawcett St. in Smithville, Texas. It'll be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week.

The two centers in Harris County are at the Humble Senior Activity Center at 1401 S. Houston Ave. in Humble, Texas, and at St. John Vianney Catholic Church at 625 Nottingham Oaks Trail in Houston.

Disaster Recovery Centers to Open in Four Counties

[Newsroom America](#)

September 19, 2017

*AUSTIN, Texas *Four State of Texas/FEMA Disaster Recovery Centers will open Tuesday, Sept. 19, 2017: one in Newton County in the city of Orange; one in Harris County in the city of Houston; one in Matagorda County in Bay City; and one in Waller County in the city of Brookshire.

Disaster recovery centers offer in-person support to individuals and businesses in 39 counties included in the Texas federal disaster declaration for Hurricane Harvey and the subsequent floods.

New FEMA recovery centers opening on Sept. 20

[KTRK-TV, Houston, TX](#)

September 20, 2017

HOUSTON, Texas -- FEMA has disaster recovery centers operating around the Houston area for those needing assistance in Hurricane Harvey's aftermath.

The following locations have recovery specialists from FEMA, the U.S. Small Business Administration, the State of Texas and other agencies:

St. John Vianney Catholic Church, 625 Nottingham Oaks Trail, Houston, TX 77079

Humble Senior Activity Center, 1401 S. Houston Ave., Humble, TX 77338

Neutrality Building, 1301 Fannin St., Houston, TX 77002

Bayland Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet St., Houston, TX 77074

Sienna Annex, 5855 Sienna Springs Way, Missouri City, TX 77459

Greenspoint Mall, 12300 North Frwy., Houston, TX 77060

Webster Civic Center, 311 Pennsylvania Ave., Webster, TX 77589

Katy Mills Mall, 5000 Katy Mills Circle, Katy, TX 77494

Johnnie Arolfo Civic Center, 400 W. Walker St., League City, TX 77573

Baytown Community Center, 2407 Market St., Baytown, TX 77522

Old Amegy Bank, 2401 Termini St., Dickinson, TX 77539

Simonton Community Church, 9703 FM-1489, Simonton, TX 77476

Friendship Center, 31355 Friendship Dr., Magnolia, TX 77355

Wharton Civic Center, 1924 N. Fulton St., Wharton, TX 77488

The Church Without Walls, 5725 Queenston Blvd., Houston, TX 77084

All of these locations are open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week.

Homeowners, renters and business owners are encouraged to register at DisasterAssistance.gov or the FEMA app before coming to a center in person.

The U.S. Small Business Administration and several other state and federal agencies have a presence in the centers. SBA specialists are available to answer questions about the agency's disaster loan program.

Those living within the 39-county disaster declaration area - which includes nearly all of the immediate Houston area - may be eligible for assistance.

If you live outside of Houston, you can search for the nearest disaster recovery center on FEMA's website.

Bevil Oaks residents demanding answers from FEMA as expenses mount

KFDM-TV, Beaumont, TX

By Peter Eliopoulos

September 19, 2017

Bevil Oaks residents demanding answers at meeting at the Jefferson County courthouse.

Hundreds of people from Bevil Oaks packed into the Jefferson County courthouse Tuesday night, hoping to get answers from FEMA.

Harvey damaged or destroyed just about every home in that community.

A FEMA representative explained what benefits they can sign up for and took questions afterward.

VTR: <http://kfdm.com/news/local/bevil-oaks-residents-demanding-answers-from-fema-as-expenses-mount>

Pearland to host disaster recovery workshop, townhall for residents affected by Hurricane Harvey on Sept. 22

Community Impact

By Nora Olabi

Sept. 19, 2017

The city of Pearland along with state Rep. Ed Thompson, R-Pearland, and U.S. Congressman Pete Olson, R-Pearland, will host two town halls and provide one-on-one disaster assistance for residents affected by Hurricane Harvey from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 22, at First United Methodist Church Pearland.

The disaster recovery event will include a town hall at 11 a.m. and then a second town hall at 2 p.m. The public forum will be an open discussion and Q&A with attendees. Separately, agency representatives will set up booths, distribute collateral and answer questions through the town hall meetings from 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

Representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency—or FEMA—will be on hand to answer general questions, register survivors who were unable to do so by phone or online, and provide application updates for residents who have already filed with the agency for assistance. For residents who have damaged homes or who have been displaced, FEMA can provide home repair, home replacement, temporary housing and, in rare instances, permanent construction assistance, depending on the application process. Hurricane Harvey victims must apply before Oct. 23 to be eligible for FEMA assistance.

U.S. congressmen in Brazoria County
Pete Olson, R-Pearland
Congressional District 22
Pearland office
1920 Country Place Parkway, Ste. 140
281-485-4855

Randy Weber, R-Friendswood
Congressional District 14*

League City office
174 Calder Road, Ste. 150
281-316-0231

*This district includes the Lakes of Savannah development near Pearland.

In addition, representatives from the U.S. Small Business Administration and the Texas Workforce Commission will also be available to answer resident questions.

“As our Brazoria County communities continue to recover from Harvey, navigating the federal and state process for recovery benefits can be daunting,” Olson said in a statement. “My office is here to help. We will have officials from FEMA, SBA and the Texas Workforce Commission on hand to answer questions and help with the application process.”

Residents who are struggling with the FEMA application process are also encouraged to reach out to their local U.S. representatives.

Nearly 1,000 homes in Pearland alone were inundated during the widespread flooding, and more than 200 were rescued from their homes. For more information on the damage, read our September cover story [here](#). A list of relevant disaster resources, including clothes, counseling, food and legal aid, can be found [here](#).

Farenthold to lead town hall meeting

[Corpus Christi Caller-Times](#)

September 19, 2017

Tuesday, U.S. Congressman Blake Farenthold was anticipated to lead a town hall meeting in Aransas Pass, bringing together representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and residents.

Aransas Pass, along with neighboring Rockport, Fulton and Ingleside, incurred significant damage Aug. 25, when Category 4 Hurricane Harvey spun onto Coastal Bend shores, bringing with it 100-plus mph winds.

The meeting was intended, in part, to connect federal agents with area residents, many of whom have expressed frustration with the process to receive aid.

A news release issued by Farenthold's office Tuesday afternoon stated the meeting would help "provide more information on applying for assistance and what to do if you get a denial from FEMA."

If you received HUD assistance before Harvey, you may be eligible for FEMA help

[KRIS-TV, Corpus Christi, TX](#)

September 19, 2017

If you were directly impacted by Hurricane Harvey and live in one of the 39 counties designated for FEMA Individual Assistance and were receiving rental assistance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) prior to the hurricane, you should register with FEMA.

You can apply for FEMA help if you were displaced from your HUD-assisted housing because of Hurricane Harvey. This includes those who were:

- Living in HUD-assisted public housing.
- Living in a privately owned apartment that provides rental assistance from HUD.
- Living in a private home using a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher from a housing authority.

Some of the assistance you may be eligible for:

- Temporary assistance to pay for a place for you and your family to live.
- Grants to replace essential contents—such as clothing and essential household items—and medical, dental and burial expenses.

Those who have HUD rental assistance may receive FEMA help to pay for a place to live until:

You relocate back to public housing.
You relocate back to the private housing that provides HUD assistance.
You sign a lease with a private property owner using a Section 8 voucher.

Federal law prevents FEMA from duplicating benefits provided by another agency. When a HUD-assisted resident's home becomes unlivable, HUD stops paying rental assistance for that residence. The survivor may then apply for FEMA Individual Assistance. There is no duplication of benefits because HUD is not paying rental assistance.

When the survivor moves back into a HUD-assisted residence, or signs a new lease for rental housing under the Section 8 program, HUD assistance resumes. At that point, the survivor may no longer receive FEMA assistance.

The first step to be considered for FEMA help is to apply. There are three ways:

Log onto DisasterAssistance.gov with any computer, smartphone or tablet.
Download and use the FEMA app. You can also use the app to check the status of your application.
If you cannot access the website or FEMA app, call the FEMA helpline at 800-621-3362. If you use TTY, call 800-462-7585. If you use 711 or Video Relay Service (VRS), call 800-621-3362.

The counties designated for FEMA Individual Assistance are Austin, Aransas, Bastrop, Bee, Brazoria, Calhoun, Chambers, Colorado, DeWitt, Fayette, Fort Bend, Galveston, Goliad, Gonzales, Hardin, Harris, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Karnes, Kleberg, Lavaca, Lee, Liberty, Matagorda, Montgomery, Newton, Nueces, Orange, Polk, Refugio, Sabine, San Jacinto, San Patricio, Tyler, Victoria, Walker, Waller and Wharton Counties.

Hey, Texplainer: How Is FEMA Distributing Money To Areas Hit By Harvey?

By Alex Samuels
September 19, 2017

Hey, Texplainer: How much aid has the federal government sent Texas for Hurricane Harvey recovery, and how is the Federal Emergency Management Agency distributing that money?

It's been several weeks since Harvey slammed the Texas Coast and left Houston — the nation's fourth-largest city — grappling with unprecedented flooding. State officials put the latest death toll at 82, though it may take weeks to determine the exact number of fatalities.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott requested money from the federal government, which has sent more than \$1 billion since the federal disaster declaration issued by President Donald Trump on Aug. 25, according to Melaney Rodriguez, a member of Americorps-FEMA Corps, a partnership between The Corporation for National and Community Service and FEMA that helps with disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

FEMA has given the state \$364.2 million in individual assistance (funding for individuals and households affected by Harvey) and \$181 million for public assistance (money given to cities, counties and municipalities).

Several federal officials have said there's no telling how long they'll be in the state offering aid or how much money Texas will need for Harvey relief efforts. Abbott has predicted that Texas will need more than \$180 billion in federal aid — \$60 billion more than what was needed after Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

“We’re going to be here as long as we’re needed,” said Deanna Frazier, a FEMA spokeswoman. “Right now, we have 5,400 FEMA workers here in Texas helping to get money to the people of Houston and the cities, counties and municipalities to help recover from Harvey.”

Here’s a breakdown of how FEMA money is allocated: Individual assistance for Harvey survivors

As of Friday afternoon, 743,676 people had applied for FEMA assistance post-Harvey. Thus far, 288,084 have been approved, a total that’s expected to increase.

When someone registers for FEMA assistance, they have to meet certain eligibility criteria, such as being from one of the counties in Abbott’s disaster declaration for Harvey.

The immediate assistance Harvey survivors can apply for through FEMA includes:

Housing and rental assistance to help people pay rent at another location while they’re displaced

Other Needs Assistance, which includes the agency’s Transitional Shelter Assistance that gives housing vouchers so evacuees can temporarily stay at hotels across the state, or its Critical Needs Assistance program, which provides \$500 grants for items such as food, water and diapers Public assistance for cities hit by Harvey

The second way FEMA aid is dispersed is through its public assistance program to help cities, counties and municipalities that may need help rebuilding infrastructure such as bridges, pump stations and roads after Harvey.

As of Thursday, \$181 million has been dedicated to Texas, Frazier said.

The money can be used to pay for debris removal, she said, adding, “All of the efforts that cities, counties and municipalities put into safety and life saving measures are also included in that amount.”

Any emergency protective measures that cities, counties and municipalities took prior to Harvey’s landfall — such as building levees to stop floodwaters — is repaid by FEMA in full. Local entities can also receive federal reimbursement for up to 90 percent of any disaster-related costs incurred during and after the storm — through a separate program.

Usually, FEMA’s cost-share is 75 percent, but the amount was increased to 90 percent because of the catastrophic nature of the storm.

Local cities and counties are responsible for paying the remaining 10 percent.

Since each project has to be completed before the city, county or municipality can apply for reimbursement, some may not see that money for several months.

The bottom line: Those eligible for individual assistance through FEMA — whether for grant money or housing assistance — will get aid immediately. Any emergency protective measures that cities, counties and municipalities took prior to Harvey’s landfall is repaid by FEMA in full. But the roughly \$1 billion committed for Harvey relief thus far is just a small fraction of the expected need on the Gulf Coast.

As Hurricane Harvey approached Texas, state prison officials moved thousands of inmates to higher ground. But now that the storm has passed, about 600 of the evacuees gained protection from hot conditions in their cells thanks to an ongoing federal lawsuit.

Homeowners In Flood-prone Areas Face Tough Questions Over Whether To Rebuild

CBS News

September 19, 2017

Victims of the recent, massive storms in Texas and Florida face tough decisions about whether to rebuild. The Natural Resources Defense Council reports there are more than 30,000 properties in the U.S. that experience repeated flooding. Texas and Florida rank among the most affected states.

FEMA says the National Flood Insurance Program has already paid \$347 million to Hurricane Harvey victims. During Harvey, 27 inches of water flooded the Burgan family's house. This isn't the first time the Burgans have flooded, but it may be the last time they rebuild, reports CBS News' Omar Villafranca.

"It's not just bricks and wood. It's our home," Rachel Burgan said.

Rachel, her husband David and their two teenagers live in a house that's been in Burgan's family for 52 years.

Six inches of floodwater from Tropical Storm Allison crept into the house in 2001. But last month during Hurricane Harvey, more than two feet of water inundated the home. The Burgans, like the overwhelming majority of other households in the area, didn't have flood insurance.

Asked if they would consider getting flood insurance now, Rachel said, "Yes. With Allison it was six inches. This is much more devastating. This is walls, this is furniture. Thank goodness stuff can be replaced."

FEMA says it's still assessing flood damage from Hurricanes Irma and Harvey.

As of Saturday, more than 100,000 claims have been submitted under FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program, which is nearly \$25 billion in debt. They estimate the cost for Harvey alone will reach \$11 billion.

Following Superstorm Sandy in 2012, FEMA paid over \$8.6 billion in flood insurance claims.

According to a recent report, the National Flood Insurance Program spent \$5.5 billion between 1978 and 2015 repairing more than 30,000 properties that repeatedly flood.

"Take a hard look at the toll on your family and your finances," said former FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate.

"Ultimately for the taxpayer there's a point at which when we deal with repetitive loss, it doesn't make sense to keep paying for those properties over and over again unless we're changing something. Either mitigating or elevating that home or offering buyouts," Fugate said.

If their home floods again, Rachel said for her husband it's "third strike and we're out."

"As much as we love this and we need to rebuild and want to rebuild. We're both public school teachers and so the cost comes in," David said.

Houston-area officials are hoping the government will buy back some homes in flood-prone areas. According to the Houston Chronicle, they've already received more than a thousand requests from homeowners looking to sell.

Free services, resources for Houston-area victims of Harvey

KHOU-TV, Houston, TX

September 19, 2017

HOUSTON – There is a growing list of companies and government agencies stepping up to help those affected by Hurricane Harvey. It's just another example of how our community is #HoustonStrong.

Think something should be added to this list? Send us an email: web@khou.com.

Hot meals can be purchased with food stamps: Approving a request by Texas officials to waive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) regulations to allow program participants to buy hot foods and hot ready-to-eat foods with their benefits. FNS has notified authorized SNAP retailers in Texas of this waiver, which will be in effect through September 30. [Tap here for more info.](#)

Free home repair: In Houston, Rebuilding Together provides free repair and renovation programs for elderly low-income, disabled and service-veteran homeowners in need. Our programs address basic living, life event and quality-of-life circumstances. [Tap here for more.](#)

Free home cleanup: Gallery Furniture is excited to be partnering with CrisisCleanup.org, in order to help welcome and organize those individuals and families who have been affected by Hurricane Harvey, and are in need of assistance to clean up their homes. Crisis Cleanup is a free organization that connects volunteers with people in need, in order to maximize relief efforts per the "4 C's" of disaster recovery: Communication, Coordination, Collaboration, and Cooperation. [Tap here for more.](#)

Free legal help: The State Bar of Texas Disaster Hotline has been activated: (800) 504-7030. The hotline — answered in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese — connects low-income people affected by a disaster with legal aid providers in their area who can help with such issues as replacing lost documents, answering insurance questions, helping with landlord-tenant problems, and handling consumer protection concerns such as price-gouging and contractor scams during the rebuilding process. Callers can leave a message at any time. [Tap here for more resources from Houston Volunteer Lawyers.](#)

Tetanus vaccinations: Prescription Benefits Manager Paramount Rx is supporting the free distribution of Tetanus vaccines at the select H-E-B grocery stores listed below in certain areas affected by Hurricane Harvey. The vaccines are available to anyone aged 14 and up and are free of charge, while supplies last. [Tap here for more.](#)

Free driver's license replacement: The Texas Department of Public Safety won't charge a fee for people who lost their means of identification during Hurricane and Tropical Storm Harvey. DPS said people living in counties declared as disaster areas by Gov. Greg Abbott are cleared to have the \$11 surcharge waived. According to Gov. Greg Abbott, the Texas Department of Safety will be replacing driver's license cards at no cost for disaster-designated counties. [Tap here to read more.](#)

Fee to replace license-to-carry card temporarily waived: Governor Greg Abbott has directed the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) to provide no-cost replacements of License to Carry a Handgun (LTC)

cards and Private Security Board (PSB) licensee cards for eligible residents who have had their cards lost or damaged as a result of Hurricane Harvey. Tap here to read more. Governor Greg Abbott has directed the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) to provide no-cost replacements of License to Carry a Handgun (LTC) cards and Private Security Board (PSB) licensee cards for eligible residents who have had their cards lost or damaged as a result of Hurricane Harvey. Tap here to read more.

Free photo restoration: Some photo retouch artists have pulled together to help people restore irreplaceable family photos damaged by the storm. Visit the Facebook page for Texas Photo Renovators here.

Free bikes and bike repair: Houston Bike Share has partnered with BikeHouston, Freewheels Houston and Rice Bikes to “Keep Houston Rolling” by collecting bike donations, distributing bikes to community members in need, and repairing bikes with flood damage. Tap here to read more.

Additional list of resources from Senator Cornyn's webpage:

Hurricane Harvey Information and Resources

Last Updated September 18th, 2017 at 7:54 AM CDT

To register for FEMA Disaster Assistance, click here or dial 800-621-3362

For road closures across Texas, click here or call 800-452-9292

For evacuation information and non-emergency help, dial 2-1-1

Download the FEMA app with emergency information by county here.

FEMA Emergency Lodging Assistance Program: Click here for Transitional Sheltering at participating hotels.

Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP): Click here for information about D-SNAP and how to apply.

Veterans Services: For Mobile Vet Centers, Mobile Medical Units, and more info, click here.

Disaster-related Unemployment: If you lost your job due to Hurricane Harvey, click here.

USA.gov: Click here for additional information about federal resources.

State Declarations

Governor Abbott has issued a disaster declaration for the following Texas counties: Angelina, Atascosa, Aransas, Austin, Bastrop, Bee, Bexar, Brazos, Burleson, Caldwell, Cameron, Calhoun, Chambers, Colorado, Comal, Brazoria, DeWitt, Fayette, Fort Bend, Galveston, Goliad, Gonzalez, Grimes, Guadalupe, Hardin, Harris, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Jim Wells, Karnes, Kerr, Kleberg, Lavaca, Lee, Leon, Liberty, Live Oak, Madison, Matagorda, Montgomery, Newton, Nueces, Orange, Refugio, San Patricio, Polk, Sabine, San Jacinto, Tyler, Trinity, Victoria, Walker, Waller, Washington, Wharton, Willacy and Wilson.

Aransas, Austin, Bastrop, Bee, Brazoria, Calhoun, Chambers, Colorado, DeWitt, Fayette, Fort Bend, Galveston, Goliad, Gonzales, Hardin, Harris, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Karnes, Kleberg, Lavaca, Lee,

Liberty, Matagorda, Montgomery, Newton, Nueces, Orange, Polk, Refugio, Sabine, San Jacinto, San Patricio, Tyler, Victoria, Walker, Waller and Wharton counties for Individual Assistance and assistance with debris removal and emergency protective measures, including direct federal assistance, under the Public Assistance program.

Federal Disaster Assistance

National Flood Insurance Program policyholders may call 1-800-621-3362 from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. (CDT) for general information, servicing of claims, or technical assistance.

Texans who have sustained property damage from severe storms and flooding are urged to register with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at disasterassistance.gov.

Other Disaster Resources

Individuals who sustained damage within the State of Texas may call 800-621-3362 to register with FEMA.

To get help filing a personal insurance claim, call the Texas Department of Insurance's Consumer Help Line: 800-252-3439 (Note: this is not an emergency number).

Replacing Lost or Damaged Documents

SNAP Card (food stamps): call the Lonestar helpdesk toll-free at 1-800-777-7328.

Green Cards: Call 800-375-5283 or [click here](#).

Birth and Death Certificates: Call 888-963-7111 or visit [this website](#).

Texas Driver's License: Call 512-424-2600 or [click here](#).

Bank Checks, ATM/Debit Cards, or Safe Deposit Boxes: Call 877-275-3342 or [click here](#).

Credit Cards: Contact your issuing institution: American Express (800-992-3404), Discover (800-347-2683), MasterCard (800-622-7747), or Visa (800-847-2911).

Credit Reports: Contact Equifax, Experian, or Transunion at 877-322-8228 or visit annualcreditreport.com

Social Security Card: Call 800-772-1213 or [click here](#).

Fraud Alerts or a Credit Freeze: Call 877-438-4338 or [click here](#).

Medicare Cards: Call 800-772-1213 or [click here](#).

Passport: Call 202-955-0430 or 877-487-2778 or [click here](#).

U.S. Savings Bonds: Call 800-722-2678 or 800-553-2663 or [click here](#).

Tax Returns: Call 800-829-1040 or [click here](#).

Military Records: Call 866-272-6272 or [click here](#).

Vehicle Titles: Call 888-368-3689 or [click here](#).

Replace a Texas Marriage Record or Certificate: Visit this website for statewide information or visit this site for your issuing Clerk of Court.

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Debris piles, sediment pose health risks

KHOU-TV

By Janelle Bludau

September 19, 2017

HOUSTON - As residents work to clean out their flooded homes, they may not realize the risks that remain in their streets. Dirt and debris left behind from floodwaters may pose health hazards that many have not yet heard of.

"We've done some testing. Very little is known about the sediment," Dr. Winifred Hamilton with Baylor College of Medicine said.

Hamilton said they've pulled samples from both the flood water and the sediment left behind.

"Some had E. Coli which is an indicator of sewage, levels were very high in certain areas and less and some but we had them everywhere," Hamilton said.

They tested the samples, in which they found elevated levels of bacteria, mold spores and heavy metals.

"So arsenic, close to what is over the limit for playgrounds," Hamilton said.

But that's just a few samples.

"So it can be very very different in different parts of the city," Hamilton said.

And those toxins not only washed through our streets, but our homes. We know to wear masks inside, but what about in your front yard.

"The big concern is the dust. So any sort of clean up like with a broom or something, you don't want to get dust, you should be wearing respiratory protection if you're cleaning sediment in your yard," Hamilton said.

Doctor Sandeep Duggal with Memorial Hermann Southeast says the risks are plenty.

"Those things can cause G.I. illness, skin infections, if there's any kind of break in your skin, from moving things, there's glass, there's wooden pieces, moving objects," Dr. Duggal said.

Hamilton says don't wear your shoes inside and constantly wash your hands. The key is common sense.

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Raw Sewage Spilled In Houston Area After Wastewater Plants Damaged By Harvey

[Houston Chronicle](#)

By Alex Stuckey

September 19, 2017

Nearly 31.6 million gallons of raw sewage spilled across southeast Texas in the wake of Hurricane Harvey, pouring into neighboring communities and waterways as dozens of wastewater treatment plants were hit by high winds and flooding, according to state records.

Most of the sewage spilled in Harris and Fort Bend counties, with 65 separate releases dumping 20.7 million gallons of sewage in Harris County and 11 spills dumping 9.5 million gallons in Fort Bend.

Weeks after the storm hit, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality says 10 sewage treatment plants — including six in the Houston area — are inoperable or destroyed, and more than 40 others were operating as of Monday with problems as minor as broken-down pumps or as serious as structural damage.

Thousands of residents, meanwhile, have been told to reduce their use of affected sewage systems by limiting toilet flushes, bathing and laundry as officials work to repair the damaged facilities, although some of those warnings have since been lifted.

“The magnitude and the nature of this flooding impacted facilities in a way that they could not operationally respond to,” said Andrea Morrow, TCEQ spokeswoman.

The state records — an ongoing tally updated regularly online — offer a glimpse into the widespread damage to wastewater treatment plants, but it’s not clear which communities were affected or which plants were responsible for the spills. TCEQ has not released those details.

Brian Zabcik, clean water advocate for Environment Texas, said the plants’ reports provide an incomplete picture.

“For a lot of reports, no one was able to estimate how much was released,” Zabcik said. “Where there should be a reported volume of sewage released, there’s either a blank or an unknown.”

Among the plants that remain damaged from the storm include the Turkey Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant in west Houston, downstream from the overloaded Addicks and Barker reservoirs, and the Bear Creek Pioneers Park Wastewater Treatment Plant north of the Addicks dam.

Two in Harris County are considered destroyed – the Cedar Bayou Park Wastewater Treatment Plant in Baytown and the McDonough Marine Service plant in Channelview, according to TCEQ. Others considered inoperable include two in northeast Harris County and plants in Brazoria, Jefferson, Orange and Washington counties.

Overall, the state received reports of 179 spills of sewage. Galveston reported the release of 135,000 gallons of sludge in 15 spills into Galveston Bay last week after equipment failure at the city’s wastewater treatment plant. Walker County has reported four spills with 426,000 gallons, and Montgomery County has had 10 spills with 131,200.

The spills add to a problem already plaguing counties decimated by the hurricane: contaminated floodwater. This contaminated water can contain infectious organisms and intestinal bacteria, said Andrea Morrow, TCEQ spokeswoman.

Ten feet of water

The Turkey Creek plant in west Houston was submerged in 10 feet of water, knocking it offline around Aug. 26, the day torrential rains began moving through Houston.

Turkey Creek still is running on backup generators, Reed said, which is why the commission listed it as inoperable. The city's West District plant also flooded but was returned to full working order last week, said Alanna Reed, Houston Public Works spokeswoman.

She did not elaborate on how many residents were without sewer services while the repairs were ongoing.

Bruce Nichols, 71, who lives near both plants, said his neighborhood was asked to limit its water usage for about 10 days while crews worked to get the plants back in operation.

He said he was impressed by how quickly the city got Turkey Creek running again. Reducing water usage, he said, "wasn't burdensome, it really wasn't."

City officials warned Nichols' neighborhood of potential sewage overflow, but he said it didn't happen near him. Reed said there were only a few reports of problems, but she did not provide a number.

The Bear Creek area in Katy also reported sewage problems after the wastewater treatment plant was compromised. Students at Bear Creek Elementary School started classes in a local high school.

In the city of Brazoria in Brazoria County, the sewage treatment plant went offline on Sept. 3 after two feet of water flooded the electrical panels, said David Jordan, the city's public works director.

Officials ordered a mandatory evacuation until the plant began operating again on Sept. 7, he said.

The plant remains on TCEQ's "inoperable" list because officials have been unable to test the water for ammonia, oxygen and other components, he said Tuesday. The first samples were set to be sent for testing Wednesday.

As many as 3,000 city residents could have been affected by the plant shutdown, but he said he did not know how many stayed behind during the evacuation.

Millions of dollars in repairs

The state commission has not released details about how many total facilities were downed at the peak of the storm.

Morrow said TCEQ worked quickly to bring as many facilities back online as possible, providing resources such as staff, equipment and contractors. She said the commission is also diverting wastewater where possible from downed facilities to those that are working, though she did not provide details about how those transfers are being done.

When Turkey Creek was overtaken by water on Aug. 26, Reed said city officials met with oil and gas companies to strategize how to get the floodwaters out of the plant.

They considered several options, such as pumping the water, but eventually decided to wait for the water to recede, she said.

Once it did, Reed said cleanup crews worked 24/7 to clean the plant, making sure all electrical components were in good working order. Generators and transformers had to be replaced, and power needed to be restored to certain parts of the plant, she added.

City officials still are calculating the cost of these fixes, but have said it will be in the millions of dollars.

Reed was unsure how these fixes would be paid for, but Morrow said there are many resources available, including from the Texas Department of Emergency Management, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Texas Water Infrastructure Coordination Committee.

Harvey's Toll On Air, Water Emerges

Austin American Statesman

By Ralph K.M. Haurwitz

September 17, 2017

Fifty-five refineries and petrochemical plants in the Houston, Corpus Christi and Beaumont areas collectively emitted 5.8 million pounds of benzene, ammonia and other pollutants to the air in connection with Hurricane Harvey, according to reports filed by the companies with state regulators.

In addition, more than 560,000 gallons of crude oil, gasoline, saltwater and other contaminants spilled from wells, pipelines and storage tanks into coastal or inland waters, including the Colorado River southeast of Austin in Fayette County.

Meanwhile, 19 public drinking water systems serving 14,000 people remain inoperable and 77 other systems have warned consumers to boil tap water before drinking it, according to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Thirty-one sewage treatment systems are inoperable, with some treatment plants needing to be rebuilt from the ground up.

"The fact that those plants were almost certainly flooded means that raw sewage is in the floodwaters," said Ilan Levin, the Austin-based associate director of the Environmental Integrity Project, an advocacy group.

Data on pollution related to Harvey have been in almost continual flux, as companies revise estimates and reports are investigated by state and federal authorities, including the Texas environmental commission, the federal Environmental Protection Agency, the Texas Railroad Commission, the Texas General Land Office and the U.S. Coast Guard.

"We still have teams out in the field working long hours trying to identify orphan containers, such as 55-gallon drums," Texas environmental commission Chairman Bryan Shaw told the American-Statesman.

Many such drums and tanks broke loose from moorings amid flooding, especially along the coast. All must be assessed to determine what, if any, fuel or chemicals they contain. Shaw said 771 containers have been examined or relocated.

The public health impacts of much of the pollution has yet to be established.

On a brighter note, a number of water and wastewater systems that had been knocked out of service are now operational. For example, Beaumont's water system, which serves about 260,000 people in the city and surrounding areas, has completed a two-step process, first resuming service and then, last weekend, lifting its boil-water notice.

And although 15 dams sustained varying degrees of damage, there have been no reports of harm to downstream property or loss of life, according to the Texas environmental commission and the EPA. The state commission said it would meet with affected dam owners in the next week.

Magellan spill was largest

Records compiled by the Railroad Commission, which regulates the energy industry, list about 30 Harvey-related spills from oil wells, brine pits, storage tanks and pipelines totaling 568,000 gallons.

The lion's share — 420,000 gallons of gasoline — spilled from a storage tank farm in Galena Park, east of Houston, operated by Magellan Midstream Partners LP. Floodwaters caused two storage tanks to shift, releasing their contents, according to the Railroad Commission.

It was the largest spill of fuel or chemicals reported thus far from the storm, which made landfall in Texas last month. A Coast Guard official told The Associated Press that Magellan has recovered 84,000 gallons, while the rest evaporated or seeped into the ground.

Magellan said on its website that it sprayed the fuel with foam to suppress harmful vapors, adding that "a small amount" of fuel entered the Houston Ship Channel. Affected soil at the facility is being removed and replaced, the company said.

The Oklahoma-based company has a checkered history. Its Longhorn pipeline spilled about 87,000 gallons of crude oil in Bastrop County in July. Magellan previously agreed to pay \$18 million in remediation expenses and civil penalties related to three spills that fouled waterways in three states, including a 20,000-gallon spill in Texas City.

A total of 47,000 gallons of crude oil and "produced water" — tainted water that comes out of wells along with oil — spilled into the Colorado from storage tanks that broke loose from piping at several locations leased by Houston-based EnerVest Ltd. in Fayette County. The company planned to reset the tanks, reconnect piping and put the wells back into production, according to the commission's records.

"Do we plan for storms and hurricanes? Absolutely," EnerVest spokesman Ron Whitmire told the Houston Chronicle. "But nobody plans for 50-plus inches of rain."

Nevertheless, "oil and gas operators are expected to maintain control of their wells and facilities regardless of the weather," Railroad Commission spokeswoman Ramona Nye said. Administrative penalties are determined on a case-by-case basis, she said.

No reporting requirement for some spills

Harvey underscores some regulatory gaps when it comes to oil spills. Although the state prohibits produced water spills and requires such spills to be cleaned up, it does not require operators to report such spills. And yet produced water can contain heavy metals, radioactive elements and other contaminants, said Luke Metzger, director of Environment Texas, an advocacy group.

There is no indication that pollutants have migrated away from any of the 51 Superfund toxic-waste sites in Harvey-affected areas of the state, Shaw said. However, two of those sites, both in Harris County, sustained damage and are undergoing repairs and further study.

An EPA dive team began underwater inspections this week at the San Jacinto River Waste Pits site, once used to dispose of paper-mill sludge, and repairs on the site's protective cap are also underway. At the U.S. Oil Recovery site, a former wastewater treatment and waste disposal operation, excess water has been removed and materials in former treatment tanks have been secured. Sampling is ongoing at the various Superfund sites to monitor for migration of pollutants.

The Coast Guard's National Response Center tracks oil spills and chemical releases to water or land. An analysis of the response center's database by the Environmental Integrity Project found about three dozen reports of Harvey-related releases in Texas. Such reports can be filed by companies, as well as by members of the public.

But the database is hardly a complete picture, Levin said: "We know that this is the tip of the iceberg."

A separate Texas environmental commission database tracks reports that companies are required to file on emissions of air contaminants. Fifty-six plants — 30 in the Houston area, 12 in the Corpus Christi region and 13 in the Beaumont area — have reported Harvey-related emissions, according to an analysis by Environment Texas. Often the emissions were associated with shutting down operations in advance of Harvey and while starting up afterward.

For example, the Port Arthur chemical plant of Flint Hills Resources, a unit of Koch Industries Inc., reported releasing 1.4 million pounds of contaminants, including nearly 800,000 pounds during shutdown and more than 600,000 pounds during startup. The chemicals included carbon monoxide, which is poisonous, and benzene, which is poisonous in the short term and a cause of cancer in the event of long-term exposure.

Claire Jackson, a Flint Hills Resources spokeswoman, said the startup and shutdown notifications filed with the commission estimate worst-case scenarios. "The actual emissions associated with this process will be filed with the TCEQ within two weeks," she said.

The health impacts of some of the pollution associated with Harvey are a matter of dispute and uncertainty.

Other than "a relatively high" ozone reading one day, the Texas environmental commission has not seen any readings that suggest the air has been potentially harmful in any acute way to the public, Shaw said. The EPA said elevated readings of benzene and volatile organic compounds in the Manchester neighborhood of Houston likely resulted from the roof failure and spill at a storage tank of light crude oil at the Valero Houston Refinery.

Environmentalists note that some air quality monitoring units in the Houston area weren't operating for a time.

"There isn't a way to measure what the ambient exposure would be for a community, but we do know anecdotally that people are smelling these chemicals and being exposed to them," Metzger said.

Bryan Parras, who was born and raised in East Houston and lives about 2½ miles from a few refineries and chemical plants along the Houston Ship Channel, said the odors during the storm were at turns sweet, sour, acidic and gasoline-like.

“It immediately had the effect of tightening up my nostril area, my sinuses, a couple of nights. It gave me a headache, nausea, dizziness, almost a feeling of being intoxicated with chemicals,” said Parras, who is an organizer for the Sierra Club. “A lot of people talk about the water surge; what we experienced was a chemical surge.”

Some residents in the vicinity of the Arkema Inc. chemical plant 25 miles northeast of Houston were evacuated and others were told to keep their windows closed when power went out and backup generators flooded, causing organic peroxides to overheat, catch fire and explode. Numerous first-responders were treated for inhalation of acrid smoke, and some subsequently sued the company.

Arkema, which has described the lawsuit as “gravely mistaken,” reported to the Texas environmental commission that it emitted 23,600 pounds of chemicals, including ethyl benzene, which can cause headaches and irritate the eyes, skin and mucous membranes, and tert-butyl alcohol, which can cause vomiting and dizziness.

Andrea Morrow, a spokeswoman for the commission, said her agency would use its enforcement discretion on a case-by-case basis after reviewing final reports on air emissions from refineries and chemical plants.

Meanwhile, the General Land Office is investigating about 300 vessels that have run aground on the coast or otherwise broken away from their moorings, said Brittany Eck, an agency spokeswoman. The priority is to ensure that oil, gasoline or chemicals on board are secured.

Contact Ralph K.M. Haurwitz at 512-445-3604.

FEMA Faces Third Major Disaster Relief Effort As Hurricane Maria Takes

[Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#)

September 18, 2017

Still working on recovery and relief efforts in Texas after Hurricane Harvey and Florida after Hurricane Irma, federal officials were looking at the chance of even more damage in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, as rapidly intensifying Hurricane Maria seemed to be taking dead aim at an area in the Caribbean which just experienced major troubles from Irma earlier this month.

“Maria is likely to affect Puerto Rico as an extremely dangerous major hurricane,” the National Hurricane Center reported in its evening update about the progress of the storm, noting that “all indications are that rapid intensification is continuing.”

The forecast showed Maria directly over Puerto Rico on Wednesday with winds of 150 mph, a scenario that could well mean more damage for the U.S. government to deal with.

“Maria’s impact on the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico may well make Maria the third Category 4 billion-dollar hurricane for the U.S. this year, in addition to Harvey and Irma,” wrote storm expert Dr. Jeff Masters, on his hurricane blog at Weather Underground.

The forecast was especially bad news for the Virgin Islands, which already suffered major damage during Hurricane Irma.

With the hurricane heading straight for those American possessions in the northeastern Caribbean, several major airlines joined on Monday to run last minute ‘mercy flights’ from St. Croix to the U.S. mainland.

The Tourism Commissioner of the Virgin Islands said the free flights on JetBlue to Orlando, Delta to Atlanta, and American to Miami had all quickly filled to capacity, as people looked to get out of areas that were already suffering from Irma’s damage.

“We are trying to accommodate passengers (priority is given to persons with medical needs, pregnant women, the elderly and women with young children)” said Commissioner Beverly Nicholson-Doty, who also had praise for several major cruise ship lines, which also took people away from the Virgin Islands in recent days.

In Puerto Rico, the Governor and other officials were warning residents to find adequate shelter, as the outer bands of Maria were expected to start impacting that island on Tuesday, after hitting other islands in the Caribbean.

While the long range forecast was unclear on whether Maria might threaten the East Coast of the United States, it seems very clear that extra disaster relief will be needed in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, making this an even more expensive year in terms of hurricane relief for Uncle Sam.

Hurricane Maria Path Over Dominica, Heads To Puerto Rico, Category 5 Storm

[CBS News](#)

September 19, 2017

ROSEAU, Dominica – Hurricane Maria swept over the small island of Dominica with catastrophic winds overnight, starting a charge into the eastern Caribbean that threatens islands already devastated by Hurricane Irma and holding the possibility of a direct hit on Puerto Rico.

Fierce winds and driving rain lashed mountainous Dominica for hours as Maria caused flooding and tore roofs from homes as an extremely dangerous Category 5 storm. A police official on the island, Inspector Pellam Jno Baptiste, said late Monday there were no immediate reports of casualties but it was too dangerous for officers to do a full assessment as the storm raged outside.

“Where we are, we can’t move,” he said in a brief phone interview while hunkered down against the region’s second Category 5 hurricane this month.

By early Tuesday, Maria had weakened slightly to a still major Category 4 storm after pounding the small Caribbean island nation. It then regained Category 5 strength. Forecasters cautioned that fluctuations in intensity were to be expected.

Forecasters consider a Category 5 hurricane as major, extremely dangerous and capable of catastrophic winds.

On the forecast track, the eye of Maria will move over the northeastern Caribbean Sea Tuesday and approach the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico Tuesday night and Wednesday, the U.S. National Hurricane Center said.

Dominica Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit earlier captured the fury of Maria as it made landfall. “The winds are merciless! We shall survive by the grace of God,” Skerrit wrote at the start of a series of increasingly harrowing posts on Facebook.

A few minutes later, he messaged he could hear the sound of galvanized steel roofs tearing off houses on the small rugged island.

He then wrote that he thought his home had been damaged. And three words: “Rough! Rough! Rough!”

A half hour later, he said: “My roof is gone. I am at the complete mercy of the hurricane. House is flooding.” Seven minutes later, he posted that he had been rescued.

Skeritt said there were initial reports of “widespread devastation” on the small island, adding that his “greatest fear” is that the people of Dominica will wake to news of “serious physical injury and possible deaths.”

The French island of Martinique escaped Hurricane Maria largely unscathed but a communications blackout with Guadeloupe meant it would be several more hours before damage there could be assessed, a senior French Civil Protection official told the Reuters news service Tuesday.

Authorities in the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico warned that people in wooden or flimsy homes should find safe shelter before the storm’s expected arrival.

“You have to evacuate. Otherwise, you’re going to die,” said Hector Pesquera, the island’s public safety commissioner. “I don’t know how to make this any clearer.”

Puerto Rico imposed a rationing of basic supplies Monday, including water and baby formula. Officials said the rationing was necessary to ensure everyone has access to basic items such as batteries, milk, canned foods, flashlights and other supplies. It didn’t apply to gasoline or other fuels.

Maria had maximum sustained winds of 160 mph late Monday as it slammed into Dominica as a Category 5 storm, its eye passing over the island before conditions began easing, then rebounding.

The hurricane center said Maria’s top sustained winds were back up to 160 mph at 5 a.m. and that Maria’s eye was about 65 miles west-southwest of Guadeloupe and 205 miles southeast of St. Croix. The storm was moving west-northwest at 9 mph.

Before the latest fluctuation in intensity, forecasters had warned Maria would likely intensify over the next 24 hours or longer, noting its eye had shrunk to a compact 10 miles across and warning, “Maria is developing the dreaded pinhole eye.”

That generally means an extremely strong hurricane will get even mightier, said Brian McNoldy, a hurricane researcher at the University of Miami. He said it just like when a spinning ice skater brings in their arms and rotates faster.

“You just don’t see those in weaker hurricanes,” he said.

Hurricane warnings were posted for the U.S. and British Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Dominica, St. Kitts, Nevis and Montserrat. A tropical storm warning was issued for Antigua and Barbuda, Saba, St. Eustatius, St. Maarten, St. Lucia and Anguilla.

Forecasters said storm surge could raise water levels by 6 to 9 feet near the storm's center. The storm was predicted to bring 10 to 15 inches of rain across the islands, with more in isolated areas.

The latest forecast track would carry it about 22 miles south of St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands late Tuesday and early Wednesday, territorial Gov. Kenneth Mapp said.

"We are going to have a very, very long night," Mapp said as he urged people in the territory to finish any preparations.

St. Thomas and St. John are still stunned from a direct hit by Hurricane Irma, which did extensive damage and caused four deaths on the two islands.

Barry University said it chartered a private plane to carry students and staff from its St. Croix facility to Florida in preparation for Maria. It said 72 people connected to the Barry's Physician Assistant Program and a few pets were on Monday's evacuation flight.

In neighboring Puerto Rico, nearly 70,000 people were still without power following their earlier brush with Irma and nearly 200 remained in shelters as Maria approached.

Gov. Ricardo Rossello said Puerto Rico had 500 shelters capable of taking in up to 133,000 people in a worst-case scenario. He also said the Federal Emergency Management Agency was ready to bring drinking water and help restore power immediately after the storm, which could hit as a Category 5 hurricane.

"That is catastrophic in every way," said Roberto Garcia with the National Weather Service in San Juan. "People have to act, and they have to act now. They can no longer wait for a miracle."

To the north, Hurricane Jose stirred up dangerous surf and rip currents along the U.S. East Coast, though forecasters said the storm was unlikely to make landfall. Big waves caused by the storm swept five people off a coastal jetty in Rhode Island and they were hospitalized after being rescued.

A tropical storm warning was posted for coastal areas in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, and tropical storm watches were up for parts of New York's Long Island and Connecticut. Jose's center was about 365 miles south of Nantucket, Massachusetts, early Tuesday and moving north at 9 mph. The storm had maximum sustained winds of 75 mph.

Recovery

FEMA Frustrations Build As Displaced Await Answers

Galveston County (TX) Daily News

By John Wayne Ferguson
September 19, 2017

Tim Meade doesn't know what to do.

It's been three weeks since he filed a claim with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, asking for help with rental payments. After being flooded in, and subsequently rescued from, his Dickinson apartment, he's looking for assistance paying for temporary housing.

His initial claim, filed on Aug. 29, was delayed until he could provide some proof of residency. His lease, and other information, were in the flooded apartment.

“We lost everything,” Meade said.

As more days pass since Hurricane Harvey, residents around Galveston County are finding themselves in different stages of their personal recovery. Some are already working on repairing homes and interrupted lives.

Others are still trying to find their feet.

In the days after the storm, Meade and his family transitioned from a temporary shelter to a mobile home in Hitchcock — which he said emptied his bank accounts.

Now Meade is staying there with his wife, Deidra, three children, a chihuahua named Bambi and a kitten that showed up at their door one day. They have no car. Neither Tim, who said he is disabled, nor Deidra has a job.

The Meades said they are still waiting for FEMA to respond to their earliest requests for assistance.

“These people won’t contact you,” Meade said. “They say three days on the phone, then you call them and there’s no answer. It’s been 21 days, and I still don’t have an answer.”

On Monday night, more than 280 Friendswood residents showed up at a town hall-style meeting at the Friendswood Junior High School, seeking answers from FEMA and other agencies about the steps to recovery.

The meeting, organized by Galveston County Commissioner Ken Clark, covered a range of topics, including the possibilities for a buyout program, the timeline of FEMA home inspections and the possibility of FEMA bringing trailers or tents.

There was a second meeting in League City on Tuesday night, and a third planned in Dickinson next Monday.

Some of the people attending the meetings are frustrated or tired or confused, Clark said.

“I think part of the frustration is even though the storm has been a couple weeks past, it’s still relatively in its infancy as far as the recovery process,” Clark said. “It’s still ramping up to be able to provide the service that we need.”

FEMA has received more than 700,000 applications for aid, Clark said.

In some places, that glut is causing delays. The agency is hiring more people to help handle recovery efforts, including administrative assistants, engineers and construction cost estimators. It’s also trying to mobilize more contractors to act as building inspectors, FEMA spokesman William Rukeyser said.

The system can be intimidating for people, especially while they’re feeling insecure about housing and financial situations, Rukeyser said. It’s important for people who are trying to get help from FEMA to communicate what they need, and for aid workers to be clear about what they can offer, he said.

“A lot of people’s frustrations occur from a lack of communication,” Rukeyser said.

The agency has also begun opening disaster recovery centers, which — like the town hall meetings — allow people to meet one-on-one with FEMA representatives.

Those meetings are helpful, Clark said.

“Everybody’s situation is a little different and unique,” Clark said. “Having that one-on-one, the folks from FEMA can drill down and find out what the real issue is and work to resolve it.”

Meade went to the League City Recovery Center last week. He had to get a ride there with a friend who still had a car.

He came away less than satisfied, although he did turn in a copy of his lease, which he retrieved from his apartment’s now reopened main office. He’s still waiting on approval for rental assistance. His next rent check is due Oct. 1, now less than two weeks away.

“It’s rough,” he said. “I sit right here, daylight to dark, waiting on this phone. Just praying. It’s a mess.”

Can Houston Find Path To Recovery That Doesn’t Leave Poor Behind?

Christian Science Monitor

September 18, 2017

SEPTEMBER 18, 2017 HOUSTON—Two weeks after hurricane Harvey, Soni Herrera is trapped at her home – a home she and her family cannot yet live in.

Like many of the tens of thousands of Houstonians flooded out of their houses, Ms. Herrera, her husband, Jaime, and their four children benefited from the indiscriminate bravery of her community during and immediately after the storm. Neighbors helped them flee as the floodwaters crept under their doorway and rose past their knees. Friends took them in, squeezing them and another family of five into a three-bedroom home within earshot of the controlled explosions at the Arkema chemical plant.

But now, particularly for low-income families like the Herreras – Jaime is an analog x-ray technician, while Soni is on disability – the receding waters have only exposed a new raft of challenges.

Children need food, clothes, and a place to sleep. Flooded homes have to be cleaned out. Long waits in lines for donations, and on hold for relief claims, have to be endured. Plans for the school year have to be made.

For nine days, Herrera wrestled with these problems at her friends’ house. It took days before she was able to tell her sister her family was all right. She was on hold for 1 hour and 47 minutes with the Federal Emergency Management Agency before the call dropped. With Herrera and her young autistic son diagnosed with conditions that weaken their immune system, going to a shelter is not an option. After nine days, they were able to book a hotel for one night. They haven’t been able to secure temporary housing through FEMA, so they’ve been devoting hours each day to driving around the city searching for another room for another night – all while gutting their home, finding food and supplies for their children, and starting the claims process with FEMA.

A week earlier, when the demolition began, hives broke out all over Mr. Herrera’s tattooed skin after ripping Sheetrock out of their waterlogged walls. But with the help of local church volunteers recruited by Herrera’s sister, the gutting of their home for the past four years is almost complete.

It affords a rare moment of rest for Mrs. Herrera, and she sets down her walking stick and eases onto a bench under a tree in her yard. The sodden contents of her home are piled up around her, drying in the sun. Rotting Sheetrock and floorboards are piled on the side of the street. The house had never flooded before Harvey dropped an unprecedented 52 inches of rain on the city.

“I don’t know how other people are doing it,” she says, speaking through a white mask covering her nose and mouth in her Beaumont Place neighborhood in northeast Houston.

“We have to be here because we have to put a roof over our kids’ heads. We know there are donations going on, but we have to be here,” she adds. “Not everyone has the availability and access to go wait in line.”

The Herreras’ situation illustrates a trend in how cities recover from natural disasters: Inequalities that existed in cities before disasters tend to be exacerbated afterward, research has shown. As it dries out and rebuilds, Houston – one of the most multicultural, but economically disparate, cities in the country – has the opportunity to break from this trend in a way that benefits its poor and immigrant communities, experts say.

“Historically, [with] disaster recovery dollars ... money follows money,” says Robert Bullard, a professor at Texas Southern University in Houston and an expert on environmental justice. In other words, it is easier for disaster survivors with more resources to recover than those without – either because they can access aid programs more easily, or because they can afford to move away.

But Harvey presents opportunities to start addressing some of the systemic inequalities in these regions, says Dr. Bullard.

“We should break that paradigm and talk about trying to address that legacy,” he adds. “This is a real opportunity ... to make this city greener, healthier, more climate resilient, but also fairer when it comes to quality of life.”

In the aftermath of hurricane Irma, Florida has similar challenges and opportunities. One in five Floridians is an immigrant, and 20 percent are undocumented. Florida has 3.3 million residents older than 65, more than any state other than California. Some 10 percent of the state’s more than 20 million people lives in mobile homes – and are thus ineligible for FEMA relief – according to the most recent Census figures.

Disaster’s effect on inequality

If Houston is able to recover from Harvey in a way that doesn’t maintain or exacerbate inequality in the city, it will become an exception to the rule for disaster-hit American cities.

In a study of disasters in the United States from 1920 to 2010, a group of researchers from around the country found that poverty rates increased by one percentage point in counties hit by disasters that resulted in 100 or more deaths.

“Natural disaster exposure risk could become another cause of rising quality of life inequality between the rich and poor,” the researchers wrote.

Furthermore, research has uncovered inequalities in how aid is distributed in the aftermath of natural disasters. Black-owned firms were “frozen out of the clean-up and rebuilding of the Gulf Coast” after hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005, and “only 1.5 percent of the \$1.6 billion awarded by FEMA went to minority businesses, less than a third of the 5 percent normally required by law,” wrote Bullard and a co-author in the book, “Race, Place, and Environmental Justice After Hurricane Katrina.”

In the case of Houston, while the city's population and ethnic diversity has skyrocketed in recent decades, so has its income inequality.

The poverty rate of Harris County, which surrounds the city, rose from 10 percent to 17 percent between 1980 and 2014, according to a 2016 report from the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University in Houston. That poverty was also increasingly concentrated in specific areas, while the city's high-income residents "are becoming increasingly isolated from the rest of the region."

"That's the economic segregation we must acknowledge, and hopefully address," through Harvey recovery, says Bullard. "There have to be some special initiatives to address that."

For low-income and immigrant communities, figuring out what kinds of help are available after a natural disaster – let alone applying for them – can be difficult. Bullard says officials need to communicate more and be open with different communities about how recovery funds are spent.

Houston's recent emergence as the most diverse city in the country could also challenge the equity of its recovery process, particularly within its immigrant population.

The number of foreign-born residents jumped 60 percent since 2000, twice the national growth rate, according to the Migration Policy Institute. The varied experiences of that group so far illustrates how the Houston's long-term recovery effort may have to be as diverse as its population if it doesn't want anyone to be left behind.

Finding help

Maria Barrios and Francisco Zamora say they have been pleasantly surprised by their experiences since they waded out of their north Houston home in almost waist-deep water. The two Mexican immigrants, speaking in early September at the NRG Center downtown, say the shelter is comfortable for them and their five children. They also got help in applying to FEMA for aid.

"We saw what happened with Katrina, when people came in and how disorganized it was.... We just didn't know what to expect," says Mr. Zamora, through a translator.

"I still can't believe we're here," he says he tells Ms. Barrios when he wakes up at night.

Post-Harvey recovery may be more uncertain for the city's estimated 600,000 undocumented immigrants – even those with American-born children who are eligible for FEMA aid.

After President Trump entered the White House in January promising a crackdown on illegal immigration, Houston has seen some of the most aggressive enforcement. The US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) field office in Houston, which covers southeast Texas, has been one of the most active offices in the country this year, making more than 2,000 arrests from January through mid-March.

While ICE reportedly suspended immigration enforcement in the days after the storm, Kate Vickery, executive director of Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative, says the fear of enforcement could still scare some immigrants away from seeking help as they recover.

"We've seen since President Trump's election that people without legal status don't apply for federal benefits out of fear that applying on behalf of a citizen child will make them a target for immigration enforcement," she adds.

Filling out a FEMA aid application “require[s] them to fill out form to the US government with their name and address on it, and nobody can say there’s no risk associated with that.”

“That’s what we’re concerned about, that people who are undocumented don’t have access to same type of relief as people who are citizens,” she adds.

From Jacksonville to Miami to rural Immokalee, Florida will now be wrestling with many of the same questions.

Irma destroyed 200 acres of seedlings in Immokalee, a city that grows a significant portion of the country’s tomatoes every year, providing vital income to low-income residents.

“I just hope and pray that as soon as we can, we can get back to the fields,” Anita Martinez, an Immokalee resident, told the Miami Herald.

‘A long road ahead’

In Houston, Maria Molina is juggling three jobs and helping the Herreras recover.

Ms. Molina is one of the tens of thousands of Houstonians who, thanks to Harvey’s haphazard devastation, didn’t see significant flooding. So she has thrown herself into helping Herrera, her sister.

Between working multiple jobs, she called FEMA, the American Red Cross, Mayor Sylvester Turner, even the organization behind Houston Texans linebacker J.J. Watt’s relief fund, to ask for donations and help gutting their home. Eventually, she found the volunteers from the local church through a co-worker.

“The whole world is pulling together to donate,” she says on the phone earlier in the week, fighting back tears, “but no one [seems to be] giving anything.” Molina says she was talking about the federal and state governments, as well as large charities – not the individuals whose generosity became a byword during the storm. Every website she encountered had a “give here” button, but she couldn’t find anywhere to help her sister ask those groups for help.

She is speaking after spending the afternoon getting new shoes for Herrera’s children. In the rush to evacuate during the storm, the family forgot to move the children’s shoes from under their beds. The floodwater took them.

“The water was in the neighborhood for three days, and she can’t recover from that, not right away,” she says. “I’m glad neighbors can help, and [that] churches are reaching out. I just hope we can keep finding people who can help. She and her family have a long road ahead.”

Immigrant hurricane victims turn to churches amid fear

[ABC News](#)

By elliot spagat

September 20, 2017

HOUSTON (AP) — Immigrants came from across Houston to a Baptist church gymnasium and stacked dollies with boxes of cereal, orange juice and household necessities like cleaning bleach.

For many of them, the church was the safest place to seek relief after Harvey devastated Houston and left thousands of immigrants fearful of turning to the government for help amid fears they would get deported. A similar response was seen in immigrant-heavy sections of Florida after Irma swamped the state.

"We have to come together as churches to help the undocumented," Emmanuel Baptist Church pastor Raul Hidalgo said while mingling with victims and volunteers on the church gymnasium's parquet floor.

Places of worship and private charities in Texas and Florida are playing a pivotal role in the recovery effort from Hurricanes Harvey and Irma because so many storm victims are immigrants in the country illegally — and therefore ineligible for federal disaster aid. They are doing charity giveaways like the one at Hidalgo's church. Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston is hosting workshops for immigrants to explain FEMA eligibility and answer other questions.

Federal Emergency Management Agency rules allow people in the country illegally to apply for disaster aid on behalf of children under 18 years old with legal status, but many worry about the government sharing information with immigration authorities.

Cesia Lux, a 25-year-old Guatemalan, went to the church giveaway in the heavily Latino Houston Heights area for help, loading a family member's pickup truck with diapers, canned beans and other goods after her house took on a foot of water. She is in the country illegally, but her husband, 2-year-old daughter and 8-month-old son are U.S. citizens.

Her husband applied for FEMA aid despite misgivings that it might lead immigration authorities to her.

"One never knows what they do with the information," Lux said.

Houston has nearly 600,000 people in the country illegally, more than any U.S. metropolitan area except New York and Los Angeles, the Pew Research Center estimates. Florida has 850,000, more than any state except California and Texas.

Immigrants in Florida and Texas have been on edge after federal agents have stepped up enforcement efforts under President Donald Trump, who has made immigration a top priority of his administration.

Texas adopted a tough law against cities that don't cooperate with immigration authorities, fueling more fears even though a federal judge largely put it on hold Aug. 30. Attorney General Jeff Sessions has praised Miami-Dade County for dropping its "sanctuary city" policy this year and honor requests from immigration authorities to hold people in jail. Florida saw conflict arise on immigration during the storm when the sheriff in a county between Tampa and Orlando had officers check IDs for anyone entering shelters. The Florida Immigrant Coalition complained immigrants were frightened to seek shelter there.

The Florida city of Immokalee — home to a large migrant worker population — was hit hard by the storm. FEMA has set up a registration site in the city, but many immigrants rent their homes there and aren't planning to apply for government assistance. Churches in the city have been handing out food and water to immigrants struggling in Irma's aftermath.

FEMA's disaster aid application warns immigrant parents who apply for their children that information including addresses may be shared with immigration officers. It suggests consulting an attorney or other immigration expert with questions.

William Booher, FEMA's public affairs director, said the agency won't "proactively" share information with immigration enforcement agencies but will on request "if a significant law enforcement interest exists," including national security cases.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which employs thousands of deportation officers, "generally would not request this information for immigration enforcement purposes, except in the case of a national security threat, public safety threat or other criminal investigation," said spokeswoman Liz Johnson.

Senior officials in the administrations of Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama said FEMA's warning predated them. They said they never knew of information being passed to immigration authorities under their watch.

"In the Bush administration, when there was a disaster it was all hands on deck to try to help the humanitarian side," said Julie Myers Wood, ICE director from 2006 to 2008. "It was not a focus to gather information for enforcement purposes."

Craig Fugate, the FEMA director under Obama, said he referred people in the country illegally to Catholic Charities during an earlier stint as Florida's top crisis response manager.

"People are so afraid of deportation or being arrested that they won't get assistance they need just to survive," he said.

Young immigrants who came to the U.S. as children and were living in the country illegally faced a similar dilemma when applying for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, a program started by Obama that allows them to stay in the U.S. When President Donald Trump announced last week that he was ending DACA, his administration said it doesn't "proactively" share information on its 800,000 recipients with immigration enforcement officials unless they meet criteria that include posing a threat to public safety or national security.

Marta Rivera, 36, sat in a folding chair at Emmanuel Baptist Church and told an immigration advocate across the table that she avoided shelters after Harvey hit because she thought it might lead to getting deported. As she explained how Trump's presidency has made her more anxious, her 10-year-old daughter began to sob.

"I feel like my life is here," said Rivera, who came to the U.S. as a child. "If they send us to Mexico, I have nothing there. I don't know anyone."

After some coaxing, she said she would apply for FEMA aid on behalf of her three children who were born in the U.S.

Associated Press Writer Adriana Gomez Licon contributed to this report from Miami.

Dickinson Slowly Recovers From Hurricane Harvey

Clear Lake Patch

By Bryan Kirk

September 19, 2017

DICKINSON, TX — One of the hardest hit communities on the Texas Gulf Coast is slowly recovering from the onslaught of Hurricane Harvey.

Dickinson, was among the first communities to declare mandatory evacuations were in effect when the Category 4 storm slammed into Rockport on Aug. 25.

During the height of Harvey's fury, half of the city's 20,000 residents were either flooded or without power, and thousands are still seeking help nearly a month later. (Want to get daily news updates and hear about other events going on in your area? Sign up for the free Clear Lake Patch morning newsletter.)

As many as 7,900 homes were damaged or destroyed, and many Dickinson residents are still relying on donations being distributed at the Dickinson volunteer fire department at FM 517 and Dockrell Road.

Meanwhile, as residents are working to remove debris from homes and businesses devastated by Harvey, a local Buddhist Foundation has stepped in to help, donating needed supplies and \$2.3 million in cash, KTRK reported.

Stephen Huang, CEO of the Buddhist Tsu Chi Foundation in Houston, were set up inside a school gymnasium, where they handed out rice, blankets and cash cards to help those families who'd lost so much during Hurricane Harvey.

"Naturally we hear a lot of sad stories, lost life or they don't know what to do, they lost everything, they don't have insurance," Huang told KTRK. "Those are the people we try to help the most. And also the first responders, the police, the firemen."

The city has contracted with Crowder-Gulf Disaster Recovery and Debris Management for debris removal and since Sept. 6, has removed sheetrock, furniture and insulation from curbsides throughout the city, according to the city's webpage.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has opened a Disaster Recovery Center at the Old Amegy Bank Building located at 2401 Termini St.

The Disaster Recovery Center is a one stop shop for residents who had their homes and/or businesses damaged by Hurricane Harvey to help guide them through the process. The Disaster Recovery Center is open daily from 7:00am to 7:00pm.

Anyone who wishes to make a donation to the city for relief can click [here](#).

Water, shelter scarce for Rose City residents

[Beaumont Enterprise](#)

By Liz Teitz

September 19, 2017

Melissa Morgan backed her truck up to the parking lot beside City Hall in Rose City and began loading it with supplies: water, dog food and clothes pulled from boxes piled high under blue tents.

Chad Landry picked up hot dogs from volunteers serving them outside the now-moldy building, and Jessica Ferman filled up buckets from large black tanks of water to clean her muddy home.

More than two weeks after Tropical Storm Harvey hit Southeast Texas, the Orange County city of 500 is still without running water. The city's water system alongside Old U.S. 90 was overwhelmed by flooding, with 8 feet of water drowning the pipes and electrical system.

"That's the No. 1 question - when are we going to get water back?" Mayor Bonnie

Stephenson said. "Your guess is as good as mine."

They have stacks of bottled water piled high outside City Hall, and two tanks hold another 5,000 gallons of water for residents to fill up, but it makes the already-challenging task of ripping out and rebuilding homes even harder.

"If you've camped, you can do without the running water," Landry said. "But to clean, you really need it."

Cleaning is something desperately needed by almost all of the city's residents, many of whom described their homes as a "total loss."

"To my knowledge, there's one house that didn't get water, it's built up on stilts," Stephenson said. "Ninety-nine percent of Rose City is gone."

Some, like Stephenson, are staying with friends while they repair their homes. Others, like Ryan Long, have parked campers on their property, enabling them to stay near their homes while they work on them.

Stephenson said some residents are commuting from Louisiana each day, the closest they can find a place to stay.

"There's no motels or hotels," said Linda Pickering, who counts herself one of the lucky ones in Rose City because her home had only five feet of water inside.

"Everybody's struggling," said Landry, who is staying with friends for now.

Orange County Judge Stephen Brint Carlton said officials are searching for a place to accommodate more than 600 residents who evacuated to other cities, but many of the standard options are off the table.

"The other housing that you're typically looking at is for people to be in apartments, rent mobile homes or, for a temporary basis, to stay in hotels," Carlton said. "Well, the hotels are full, and almost all of the apartment complexes have had some type of damage to the first floor, so tenants had to move out."

Hurricane evacuee from Orange now calls Nacogdoches home

[KTRE-TV, Pollock, TX](#)

By Donna McCollum

September 19, 2017

NACOGDOCHES, TX - The evacuation center in Nacogdoches closed at Tuesday, but not all evacuees are returning to their original city of residence. Some hurricane victims say they're already home.

East Texas News spoke to the newest resident of Nacogdoches.

Angela Palmer had never been to Nacogdoches until her arrival two weeks ago as a hurricane evacuee from Orange.

"I had two sets of clothing, my toothbrush, and toothpaste and that was about it," Palmer said.

And Nacogdoches wasn't considered a destination spot.

"We first went around like in a circle," Palmer said. Started in Louisiana and came this way, and this is where I was left with another lady. And she has since then gone back, and I've stayed."

The woman who contends with pulmonary and back ailments is tired of running from hurricanes.

In response to a question about whether she has been in this situation before, Palmer said, "With Rita and Ike."

So when Love In the Name of Christ offered to pay the first month's rent and provide household items the former nursing aide's decided to stay.

"Everybody is so friendly and the town is so beautiful," Palmer said. "No matter where I look, there's something beautiful to see."

Love INC is currently assisting about 20 families. Numbers fluctuate from day to day. Director Patti Goodrum knows relocating is a tough decision.

"I really think the common denominator is that there is nothing to go back to," Goodrum said.

Palmer is waiting for a close friend, also an evacuee, to move in and share with the rent. Starting over provides powerful lessons.

"Pack more than two sets of clothes," Palmer said.

There are Harvey evacuees staying in a Nacogdoches hotel. FEMA will pay for their rooms for another two weeks.

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Local landmarks, recreational sites wrecked by water

Beaumont Enterprise

By Tim Collins

September 18, 2017

Cliff LaChance has lunch just about every day at Riverfront Park in Beaumont.

But when he strolled by the Neches River this week, the park was in ruins. A bright blue picnic table rested on a pair of drainage pipes. Farther down, the concrete steps and the pavilion were cracked.

"This used to be a nice place to stroll ...and have lunch," LaChance said. "Amazing what a whole lot of rising water can do. You expect a little bit of damage, but this, this is insane."

Beaumont City Manager Kyle Hayes said the city is in the process of erecting sturdier barricades at Riverfront Park and nearby Collier's Ferry. Both parks will be closed indefinitely until they can be repaired.

Hayes said the last time Riverfront Park sustained weather damage, in Hurricane Ike, the repair work ran into millions of dollars.

Hayes called the Harvey damage "significant."

"We've lost probably 30 to 40 feet of the shoreline in certain places. We'll rebuild it and work with FEMA, like we did after Hurricane Ike in 2008, but it's not a top priority right now, with so many people suffering, with flooding in their homes, people who have literally lost everything," he said. "We're trying to get our critical infrastructure back online."

Elsewhere, Southeast Texas' outdoor havens and historical legacy absorbed a glancing blow from Tropical Storm Harvey.

The John Jay French Museum, that dates to 1845, long before either of the Spindletop oil booms and a few years before the Civil War, had water damage.

Director Alicia McKibbin said the museum had "a compromised window sill," which allowed some water to blow in through the window, staining the wall and seeping into the French family clock.

McKibbin said houses from the mid-18th century, like the French and Chambers Houses in Beaumont, were built on a pier and beam foundations, which raises them above potential flood waters.

She said repairs will run about \$2,100, and she is thankful the damage was not greater.

McKibbin said the French House "has been here through many storms."

"It's survived Harvey, and we're thankful," she said. "This is just wood construction. There's no drywall, there's no plaster, there's no insulation."

Few other historical and culture landmarks in Beaumont sustained damage.

In Orange, Shangri La Botanical Gardens flooded heavily, requiring crews to work through the week to replace the drywall and floors of the library, gift shop, exhibit building and administrative facilities throughout the complex.

Elsewhere, though, "None of our downtown buildings got much water," said Clyde McKee, Stark Foundation CEO.

McKee said the Stark Foundation is more worried about its employee population than its wildlife, which has weathered floods before.

"Mainly it's just that over half our employees got flooded," he said. "We're trying to be very compassionate, lenient and understanding. All our employees are being paid and getting generous time off to take care of their personal living situation."

He said Adams Bayou flooding hasn't significantly affected the osprey, herons, alligators or beavers who live at Shangri La. The bayou's wildlife has bounced back after previous flooding.

"The wildlife will rebound," he said. "When I first came here you couldn't get near here (past the exhibit buildings), it was all underwater, but I don't think it'll affect the wildlife too much. The plants, the foliage, it'll all come back. We're at the tail end of summer. So by spring, it'll be all new growth around here."

TCollins@BeaumontEnterprise.com[Twitter.com/tadamcollins](https://twitter.com/tadamcollins)

Housing

State may consider RVs, travel-trailers to house Harvey victims

Corpus Christi Caller-Times

By Kirsten Crow

September 20, 2017

FEMA representatives held a FEMA Town Hall Meeting in Gregory to address concerns from residents and answer questions about applications. Alexandria Rodriguez/Caller-Times

ARANSAS PASS – Travel-trailers and recreational vehicles could be options for state officials seeking to house scores of residents displaced by Hurricane Harvey, federal administrators said Tuesday.

Nothing has been approved, and what is approved would ultimately be in the state's hands, officials have said – the idea being to ensure decisions are tailored to communities.

Dozens of people were killed and millions of dollars in property destroyed by Hurricane Harvey, first by hitting the Coastal Bend as a Category 4 hurricane, and later by lingering over Houston and the surrounding areas causing record flooding.

"The intent is that this is going to be a state-led effort for temporary housing with input from the local jurisdictions," said Gerard Stolar, FEMA's branch director for the Coastal Bend region. "FEMA's role in this will be to provide technical assistance to the state and advice to local jurisdictions as they go about implementing a plan."

Locally, there have been few hotels accepting FEMA vouchers for displaced residents. Many Coastal Bend residents whose homes were destroyed are staying in other cities, while others have found themselves in Corpus Christi shelters or staying with family and friends.

Congressman Blake Farenthold hosted the town hall meeting Tuesday in Aransas Pass, attended by FEMA representatives. The intent was to help residents get answers on general questions involving the recovery and provide an opportunity to talk with officials about their specific cases.

Locally elected officials and chambers of commerce have been approaching hoteliers, urging them to participate in the FEMA programs, Farenthold said, adding that his discussions with FEMA indicated that modular housing is viewed as “a last resort.”

“But if the housing market can’t handle the number of people there are, we’ve got to find a solution,” he said.

It’s estimated that thousands of people in the Coastal Bend were displaced when Hurricane Harvey roiled its 100-plus mph winds ashore Aug. 25, causing mass damage to smaller communities, including Port Aransas and Rockport.

Stolar said he couldn’t speak to specific options in consideration for local counties.

But generally, he cautioned that if officials were to move forward with options such as modular housing or RVs, planning would be key. Factors at play would include where that housing would go – commercial parks versus private lots, for example – and what kind of permitting is in place.

“With the number of people who have been displaced, these communities need to think about how they want to repopulate,” Stolar said. “Obviously you’re not going to want to have everybody back at once. So what these jurisdictions might consider is restoring a central government services – getting all their policemen and firemen in place, getting teachers a place to live – and then begin thinking about the general population.”

He added that he expected there would be additional information made available by state officials about options in consideration in the next few days.

A plan would need to involve not just hotels, but “a combination of things, and it’s going to require a whole community effort to plan for the implementation of these solutions, Stolar said.

“I can trust that everyone is aware that a lot of folks, a lot of households, have been displaced, that children have been enrolled in other school districts,” he said, addressing the crowd at the town hall meeting. “The fear is that some of these families... may not want to return. And none of us wants that to happen.”

FEMA No Longer Depending on Trailers to House Flood Victims

Colorlines

By Ayana Byrd

September 19, 2017

Tens of thousands of people are currently displaced from their homes as a result of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma. But they will not be living in government-issued trailers or mobile homes like the survivors of hurricanes past. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has decided to overhaul how it handles temporary housing for flood victims.

According to an article published today (September 19) by The Associated Press, the agency is “not borrowing from its much-maligned Katrina playbook to rely on government-issued trailers or mobile homes to shelter residents displaced by hurricanes Harvey and Irma.”

In 2005, after Katrina left more than one million people displaced on the Gulf Coast, FEMA provided housing in mobile homes or trailers for approximately 114,000 households. By March of the following year, the agency discovered that the units emitted high levels of toxic fumes, including the carcinogen formaldehyde.

Now, as the agency prepares to house people throughout Texas and Florida, Michael Byrne, FEMA's federal disaster recovery coordinator for Harvey, told The AP, "We're not going to put people in anything that's substandard. We've learned lessons."

While focused on not repeating Katrina mistakes, the agency has not yet finalized a new plan for handling massive numbers of displaced people. Aside from housing some in hotels, per The AP, "[FEMA] is working with Texas Gov. Greg Abbott to find ways to get people back in their flood-damaged homes more quickly, without using manufactured housing."

One town, Port Arthur, believes that FEMA could be doing a lot more to remedy their post-Harvey housing crisis. Located 91 miles from Houston, it was flooded by 26 inches of rain on August 29 during Hurricane Harvey.

It is a majority-Black city of 55,000 residents, situated near the country's largest oil refinery with more than one quarter of the population living below the poverty line. An estimated 3,000 to 5,000 people are currently unable to live at home because of the storm. According to an article published September 17 on ThinkProgress, "Many of them were evicted from low-income rental units that are now being gutted to prevent mold growth following the flood."

As of last week, FEMA was still determining how to house many from Port Arthur. The agency already nixed a failed plan to use two World War II-era barges. Per ThinkProgress:

Michael Sinegal, a county commissioner for Jefferson County said he is working with FEMA on other potential housing options, including tents, some of which are now going up, vacant stores and a former juvenile correction facility in the nearby town of Nederland, that could provide temporary housing.

A number of residents in Port Arthur feel race and class have impacted the federal response to their housing situation. Said Hilton Kelley, director of Community in Power and Development Association in the city, "They are playing games with the lives of thousands of African Americans here in the city of Port Arthur. I do believe that if this was a more affluent community that we would be seeing immediate action."

Senior living center residents ordered to evacuate

KHOU-TV, Houston, TX

By Larry Seward

September 19, 2017

HOUSTON - Nearly 200 residents of a senior citizen home run by the Houston Housing Authority need to evacuate.

2100 Memorial Senior Living center flooded during Hurricane Harvey. Water filled its lobby and first floor, according to the city. A "large number" of apartments also flooded, HHA said in a statement.

Authorities believe there is mold growing inside the building. Flooding also damaged the fire alarm and electrical systems. Also, only one of the building's water pumps work.

Residents told KHOU 11 News they were given letters over the weekend demanding they clear out storage units by Tuesday or have their belongings thrown away. Letters from management also required residents sign a liability waiver.

Then, management asked residents to vacate the building by Saturday.

"Engineers and inspectors who evaluated the building recommend residents vacate the facility for health and safety reasons," HHA said in a statement.

They are still assessing damage. HHA told residents their apartments are "a health and safety concern due to several building systems being compromised and other issues identified by professional engineers and inspectors."

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner's office told KHOU 11 News the seniors living there "will not be thrown out." The city expects HHA to help seniors find housing, the mayor's office said.

City councilmember Karla Cisneros told KHOU 11 News she too is working to help residents. Authorities met at noon to discuss the matter.

HHA said it already has identified "a number of other units that residents can explore as an option for relocation.

At least 35 residents use Housing Choice vouchers, given to low income families, seniors and those with disabilities to pay rent. They will be given relocation vouchers tomorrow

"We understand that losing one's home is a painful process, and we are working to ensure our residents can quickly and safely recover," said HHA President and CEO Tory Gunsolley. "During this time, we will have FEMA on-site to register residents and have property management representatives available to respond to questions."

Residents can contact HHA at (713)-260-0600.

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Older houses may need to be reconstructed

Port Arthur News

By David Ball

September 18, 2017

One way or another, there should be a flurry of construction following the flooding from Hurricane Harvey — even for homes that were built decades ago.

The information was made known at the regular meeting of the Jefferson County Commissioners Court on Monday afternoon.

Jeff Branick, Jefferson County judge, said his biggest concern are houses built from 1960s – 1980s — prior to the requirement of building at the base flood elevation plus one foot — won't be able to be raised, particularly those on a slab. Therefore, new construction will be required.

Steve Stafford, engineering staffing director for the environmental control department, said a home with more than three feet of water is typically 50 percent damaged.

Some homes in low-lying areas may qualify for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Hazardous Mitigation Buyout Program.

A building official or floodplain manager, according to information from the National Flood Insurance Program, makes the decision about a structure being "substantially damaged" at a local government level, generally.

Substantial damage applies to a structure in a special flood hazard area or 1 percent annual chance floodplain for which the total cost of repairs is 50 percent or more of the structure's market value before the disaster occurred, regardless of the cause of damage.

For example, if a structure's market value before the damage was \$200,000 and repairs are estimated to cost \$120,000, that structure is substantially damaged. Land value is excluded from the determination.

If a building in a floodplain is determined by the local official to be substantially damaged, it must be brought into compliance with local floodplain management regulations.

Owners may decide to:

Elevate their structures, or change them in some other way to comply with those local floodplain regulations and avoid future losses.

Relocate or demolish the structure.

Flood-proof a non-residential structure.

On the other hand, FEMA will allow the Texas General Land Office to administer the temporary housing program, such as trailers. This is the first time the federal agency has allowed a state agency to manage the program.

"I see some signs of encouragement," Branick said. "Housing assistance should move more quickly than before.

"I've never seen FEMA let temporary housing be handled at the state level. It will be more efficient with less fraud."

Community Development Block Grants will soon be distributed for those who have applied with FEMA. Fifty percent of the CDBGs will go to low to moderate income households and the other 50 percent to those with urgent need.

He cautioned, however, before any money can be spent, permits must be in place in compliance with FEMA maps. Branick also cautioned for homeowners not to give money for construction to a contractor until the job is finished.

The county will work "hand in hand" with federal and state agencies.

“We’ll be happy to be in one accord and we won’t have to reinvent the wheel,” he said.

For instance, there is a FEMA program called PREP where homeowners can make basic repairs to their homes that will conform to building codes. Branick said it won’t be anything like crown molding or granite countertops, just the basics.

“I don’t want people to get unreasonable expectations. It will make homes habitable,” he said.

NFIP and Flood Maps

Hurricane Harvey Shines New Light On Updated FEMA Flood Maps

Community Impact News (TX)

By Marie Albiges

September 18, 2017

As Hurricane Harvey poured rain onto parts of San Marcos, Buda and Kyle at the end of August, many residents were on high alert, prepared for a repeat of what some have come to believe is the new normal.

“We’ve been through this drill numerous times,” San Marcos Mayor John Thomaides said following three days of rain and wind as emergency officials throughout the county waited for signs of flooding, fielded calls for power outages and cleared debris from roads.

But San Marcos, Kyle and Buda residents were spared from disastrous flooding the likes of which they have seen over the past several years.

Now officials and citizens are turning to updated Federal Emergency Management Agency flood maps to ensure that if catastrophic flooding strikes again, they will at least know whether their property stands a chance against flooding and have insurance if it does not fare well during heavy rainfall.

For the first time in 12 years, FEMA has updated its flood maps for Region 6, which includes Hays, Caldwell and Guadalupe counties. The preliminary maps were publicly released April 7 and show if and how property owners’ flood-risk zones have changed.

The maps show designations of high-risk, moderate-risk and low-risk flooding, and depending on what zone the property is in determines whether homeowners are required to buy insurance. If homes are in a high-risk flood zone, flood insurance is mandatory for mortgage holders.

The new flood-hazard maps were presented to residents who live within the San Marcos Watershed during a three-day open house Aug. 22-24.

More than 675 people attended what FEMA Public Affairs Specialist Robin Smith called the “one-stop shop” open houses, held in San Marcos, Wimberley and Luling over three separate days.

Albert Sierra, who works for the San Marcos Housing Authority, attended the open house and said he wanted to get more information about renters’ flood insurance needs for the people living in the city’s public housing units.

“Our whole city has been so impacted by floods,” he said, adding he has friends who lost their homes in 2015. “Even if it’s not your house, it impacts the way you think about our whole community.”

Diane Howe, outreach program specialist for FEMA Region 6, said the region saw more increases from moderate-risk zones to high-risk zones due to changes in water flow and drainage patterns caused by development.

“There are some areas that were not previously in the flood plain that are now in the flood plain,” she said.

More land directly around the Blanco River east of I-35 saw increases in flood-risk zones, and many properties are now considered in the floodway, in areas where development is not possible.

Parts of the Victory Gardens neighborhood in San Marcos, for example, are considered in the floodway according to the new maps.

Properties that are newly mapped into a high-risk area may be eligible for a lower-cost flood insurance rate during the first 12 months following the map change in late 2018, so purchasing insurance before the maps go into effect will save homeowners money, according to FEMA. Premiums will then increase up to 18 percent each year.

“Many times the homeowner believes that they shouldn’t be in a flood plain,” Howe said. “They think their house is higher than everybody else’s.”

When that is the case, homeowners can submit a Letter of Map Amendment, or LOMA, that, if granted, removes the property from being mapped in the flood plain and removes the flood insurance requirement. This requires an elevation certificate that shows the property is actually on higher ground.

“[People] think more about what [insurance is] going to cost than considering what the risk is to their house,” Howe said. “We want people to look at this and to know: ‘Did the change affect my property; what are my options for flood insurance at this point; and knowing that I’m at risk, what should I do besides purchase insurance?’”

She said there may be other steps homeowners can take to lessen the impact of flooding, such as raising the air-conditioning unit and making sure important paperwork is kept on higher surfaces.

Residents can submit comments and appeals on the new maps—to note if a street name is spelled incorrectly or a development is not labeled correctly, for example—during a 90-day public comment period this fall.

Following the 90-day public comment period, FEMA will allow a six-month compliance period while new maps are printed and distributed and municipalities formally adopt the new maps into their city codes.

Smith said the new maps should go into effect by late 2018.

For Thomaides, the updated maps are a needed tool for San Marcos’ growth.

“Our storms are becoming more severe; our weather is changing; climate change is real,” he said. “All the science points to it. I just think that this is a new normal for our planet, certainly for our state and our region. We absolutely have to be ever more vigilant and more prepared going forward.”

Residents can see what flood risk their properties are in by visiting <http://riskmap6.com/>

Study Finds FEMA Flood Maps Missed 75% Of Houston Flood Damage Claims Between 1999 And 2009

Forbes

By Trevor Nace

September 18, 2017

A recent study found that FEMA failed to capture 75 percent of flood damages within their flood maps between 1999 and 2009. The FEMA flood maps are the primary source for how the government and insurance companies evaluate flood risk and insurance premiums. There are collectively trillions of dollars worth of property that rely on these maps being accurate.

The study, conducted by Rice University and Texas A&M University in Galveston, analyzed flood claims between the years of 1999 and 2009 during which there were five major floods. Each of these five floods did not meet the 100-year flood criteria and thus the FEMA flood maps which are based on 100-year floods should have been sufficient to cover Houston residents.

Unfortunately, 75 percent of flood damages caused by these five floods were not within FEMA's 100-year flood maps. The study was published just days before Harvey struck Houston causing devastating flooding throughout the city and many other cities across coastal Texas and Louisiana.

What went wrong? Why were the maps significantly different from reality in these five storms?

The study analyzed Hurricane Ike in 2008, Tropical Storms Erin and Allison in 2007 and 2001, respectively, and two unnamed rainstorms that resulted in flooding in 2006 and 2009. They compared these rain events to what hydrologists call a 100-year flood, meaning that a flood of that magnitude has a 1 percent or 1 in 100 chance of occurring. All five of the aforementioned flooding events did not meet the 100-year flood threshold.

Generally, FEMA models flood events by determining the amount of water required to flood rivers and streams and once flooded where that water will eventually go. However, this type of modeling can be limiting in low-lying areas such as Houston. First, imagine a town at the base of a broad mountain. If there was heavy rain on the mountain, FEMA's models would do a good job at predicting the amount of water that is likely to flow down the mountain and flood rivers and streams within the mountain town. That is, of course, if there is no significant avulsion of the rivers (where rivers abandon their current path for a new path during flood events).

In the second scenario picture heavy rainfall in a low-lying city with waterways throughout the city. In this scenario, the FEMA model doesn't do a great job at predicting where the water will go as the models are primarily used for overflow of rivers and streams. Flooding in low-lying areas can cause water to flow in practically any direction and is not dependent on the overflow of waterways.

A second limitation of FEMA's flood models is the granularity within the model compared to a complex landscape such as Houston. The models will typically classify whole neighborhoods or groups of neighborhoods with the same land use (green space, forest, concrete parking lot, etc.) and soil type (sand, silt, clay, etc.). This means the model is limited in predicting localized flood events within a specific neighborhood.

These two important limitations of FEMA's models make creating a 100-year flood map a difficult task. This is not to say the men and women of FEMA aren't experts at what they do and invaluable in their work. However, the task of modeling flood zones within a city like Houston requires a more complex, detailed, and innovative computational model. These models exist and it's time to start employing them in difficult to model areas like Houston.

As with many catastrophic disasters, we come out of them realizing the limitations of our tools and systems of protection. It's a similar lesson to the levee breaches from Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and a call for better and more robust protection against the inevitable next natural disaster.

An army of locals aid in Harvey recovery efforts

Carrollton Leader, Plano, TX

September 19, 2017

On Sept. 23, more than 200 locals from Coppell, Carrollton and Lewisville will travel to Houston to aid in mucking out homes damaged by Hurricane Harvey. Volunteers are part of The Mormon Helping Hands program, which brings together members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and their neighbors to provide community service.

Approximately 2,000 volunteers from the Dallas-Fort Worth area will join 8,000 additional Mormon Helping Hands volunteers from Austin, San Antonio and Louisiana. These volunteers, in their trademark yellow shirts, help people whose lives have been affected by natural disasters and other emergencies.

"We have had over 150 members from the Carrollton and Coppell area go down the last two weekends," said David D. Blake, President and presiding leader of local congregations in Carrollton, Coppell and Lewisville. "We estimate another 200 plus will go down this coming weekend."

The torrential downpour contaminated thousands of homes in Houston with up to five feet of water. The quick removal of walls, flooring and anything saturated by the flooding is the focus of the volunteers' efforts. Volunteers are distributed into small teams and sent to any home where they are needed. Homeowners contact volunteers by phone and by spotting the yellow shirts on their streets and asking for help directly. Area leaders of the Church in Texas organized a plan right after the hurricane hit that divided the affected areas into six parts. The Mormon Helping Hands group has worked through each of those areas, helping hundreds of homeowners.

This weekend the third wave of volunteers will inundate Houston. Volunteers are instructed to go down before sunrise on Saturday morning and work two full days and then return home Sunday evening.

"We have members who are truly committed to helping their fellow man, and so it is easy to ask and organize so many," said Blake.

Anyone over the age of 12 is encouraged to help. All members in the community are invited to participate. Coppell locals Fabian and Angie Granada alongside, Adam Darowski, Jeff Markham and Jeff Knowlton traveled to the affected area with their teenage children – Gretchen (12) and Jacob Granada (15), Henry Darowski (16), Ella (15) and Kate Markham (12) and Brianna Knowlton (13). These young adults gave up their weekend of sports and school commitments to help clear out homes and help someone in need.

"We believe in the savior's admonition to help those who stand in need. If we are true followers of Christ, then we must love his children," Blake said. "Our hearts go out to those affected so terribly by the storms, and because we love them, we want to help."

Clint Black, Don Henley, Lyle Lovett to Headline Hurricane Harvey Benefit in Texas

Paste

By Scott Russell

September 19, 2017

Clint Black, Don Henley and Lyle Lovett will take the stage for Helping Texans: A Hurricane Harvey Benefit Concert on Nov. 28 at Bass Performance Hall in Fort Worth, Texas. The singer-songwriters will do so “in support of their fellow Texans,” a press release explains, “whose lives have been upended by the ravages of one of the most vicious hurricanes in history.”

All proceeds from the one-of-a-kind show will go to The Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund at the North Texas Community Foundation, which will then distribute the funds to charitable organizations and programs working in Houston and Aransas County to bring relief to those affected by Harvey. And these distributions will be allocated according to the input of Black, Henley and Lovett, as well as Ed Bass, who is underwriting the event’s expenses so that the full proceeds from ticket sales and sponsorships can go towards supporting hurricane relief.

Black recalled what his family went through during Harvey in a statement:

“We all watched on the news as Harvey destroyed much of Southeast Texas and Houston, my hometown. We braced ourselves through the night as the flood waters grew closer to our family’s doorsteps in Houston and Katy. My mom, brothers, niece and nephews were all very fortunate and I knew I had to find a way to help those who weren’t so lucky, to recover and rebuild what was lost in the hurricane. I’m really proud to have friends like, Don, Lyle and everyone at Bass Performance Hall who’ll join together for the cause.”

“This is another example of Texans helping Texans, and I’m proud to be a part of

it,” said Henley, while Lovett added, “I’m honored to join fellow Texans Don Henley, Clint Black and Ed Bass to raise money for victims of Hurricane Harvey.”

Tickets go on sale this Friday, Sept. 22, via Bass Hall’s website and by phone at (817) 212-4280.

Lost your pet? 'Pet Reunion Pavilion' reuniting pets and owners at NRG Arena KHOU-TV, Houston, TX

By Matt Keyser

September 19, 2017

HOUSTON, Texas – As soon as Sayra Vallejo saw the picture of the pit bull-mastiff mix, she knew immediately that was her Max.

Vallejo hadn’t seen him for nearly three weeks after they were separated because of Hurricane Harvey. For nearly three weeks, she worried about Max and his brother, Mike, and where they might be, were they OK?

When she saw Max's picture, and the shredded cardboard in his kennel—the automatic giveaway that was her boy—she was overcome with joy.

Even better, when she arrived at NRG Arena's Pet Reunion Pavilion on Saturday to pick up Max, there was Mike, too. He had been transported in that morning.

"I didn't give up. I kept looking for them," Vallejo said. "It's pretty cool to have found them.

About 500 animals are housed at the pavilion—about 400 dogs and 100 cats—that were displaced from their families during the storm.

The Harris County Animal Shelter was inundated with displaced animals after Harvey hit. Harris County, in an effort to alleviate some the pressure on the shelter, partnered with Best Friends, a national animal organization, and opened the satellite shelter. Harris County helped secure the space at NRG Arena and Best Friends brought in veterinarians and volunteers to help care for the animals.

Each day, about 170 volunteers help walk, feed and clean out the cages of all the animals.

Best Friends has set up a webpage of photos lost pets and other resources to help find them. Holly Sizemore, the chief program officer for Best Friends, encouraged people to come in and look for their pet. Even if they're not there, Sizemore said Best Friends has other resources that can help find them.

Lost your pet? Click here to see if they're at NRG Arena's Pet Reunion Pavilion

The cats and dogs will be housed at the pavilion for 30 days before they're made available for adoption. Typically, the Harris County Animal Shelter places animals on a 72-hour hold before they're put out for adoption, but because of the tragic circumstances surrounding Harvey, that time was extended.

"I think the more time we can allow people to get their feet under them, to get some normalcy back, it's going to be better off for them to ... provide a home for their pet," said Kerry McKeel, a senior communications consultant for the Harris County Animal Shelter.

The pavilion will be holding an adoption day Oct. 14 for the remaining dogs and cats still housed at the arena.

As of Monday, 15 people have been reunited with their lost furry loved ones.

But there are many more that haven't found their way back home. And Sizemore urges people not to lose hope.

"Don't give up," Sizemore said. "Look online, come see us, we know where other resources are. But if you don't find your pet today, keep looking tomorrow, next week, next month. Just keep looking."

Vallejo is glad she did. She could hardly contain her excitement when she saw Max's picture on Best Friends' website. When both of her boys walked out of the pavilion, she gave them a big hug.

"It was a really good day," she said.

'Miracle' reunites Beaumont woman with cat

[Beaumont Enterprise](#)

September 18, 2017

A Beaumont woman and her cat, Leo, have been reunited after the pair were separated because of Tropical Storm Harvey.

The Houston SPCA said in a statement that Leo "loves to be outdoors and that got him into a bit of trouble when Harvey's wrath hit his Beaumont neighborhood."

Leo's owner Lynda Crabbe searched for him for two weeks before finding his photo on houstonspca.org/harvey, the statement said.

She called in with Leo's pet ID number and headed to Houston to pick him up.

"It was a miracle," Crabbe told the SPCA.

Opinion

Disdain For Experts Could Bring More Disasters

[Orange County \(CA\) Register](#)

By Thomas D. Elias

September 18, 2017

No one in American public life has more disdain for experts and their expertise than President Donald Trump. And yet, there he was in late August, on the south portico of the White House (a "dump," he had called it a week earlier) eyeing a near-total eclipse of the sun without special glasses.

Similarly, there was Trump four days after Hurricane Harvey deluged Houston with unprecedented (for that city) flooding, seeking photo opportunities where he could find them. The same thing in Florida after Hurricane Irma, the strongest ever to hit that state.

What do those appearances have to do with scientists and their expertise? Trump was only on his back porch to view the eclipse because astronomers forecast decades earlier that there would be one at the precise moment he emerged from the Oval Office to join his wife (who wore glasses recommended by experts) and his young son (who did not).

It turned out science was right — to the precise second.

It was similar in Texas. Experts from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers predicted decades ago that a gigantic flood could occur in and around Houston, which they called a "huge city built on a very flat flood plain." When it happened, Trump responded without mentioning those very accurate experts.

Other scientists for years have warned that hurricanes striking America will be increasingly severe because of the climate change roiling weather patterns everywhere on Earth. Trump disdained that prediction, cut the budget of FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and then — when it came true — milked the scene for all the positive publicity he could.

Just a week or so before Harvey, Trump revoked a Barack Obama-era regulation increasing standards for post-flood reconstruction that uses federal money. Among other items, the rule called for such construction to be elevated beyond the reach of possible flood waters. Insisting he knows more than the experts who pushed Obama for that regulation, Trump called it a “job killer.”

“No longer,” he said, “will there be one job-killing delay after another.” But experts in Houston during the height of Harvey warned that rebuilding a city of hodgepodge zoning and disorganized building codes without requiring changes like higher foundations would invite a repeat catastrophe that could waste billions of tax dollars.

Trump, as usual, ignored the experts, just as he did while pulling America out of the Paris climate change accord. Like many skeptics with more faith in their unfounded opinions than in scientific research, he criticizes experts if they’re occasionally wrong, but never credits them on the far-more-frequent occasions when they are precisely on the mark.

It’s part of an anti-intellectual trend that also sees millions of Americans believing higher education moves the country in the “wrong direction.” A survey released the other day by the Public Policy Institute of California, for example, found 72 percent of the state’s Republicans believe universities are a negative influence. Forty percent of Democrats felt the same.

A similar national poll by Florida’s Pew Research Center found 58 percent of Republicans and voters who lean GOP believe colleges and universities have a negative effect, while 72 percent of Democrats believe the opposite.

Trump’s base voters, then, share his extreme skepticism of experts and science, especially when those experts — mostly academics — recommend measures that might tap their wallets.

California is fortunate such skeptics do not control policy here. For Californians must respond to warnings about unreinforced construction that could cause myriad deaths and many billions of dollars in property damage in a very large earthquake. Other experts, meanwhile, warn such a quake is long overdue on the San Andreas Fault, which runs through or near California’s largest population centers.

Because California doesn’t buy into the current trend to skepticism, programs are under way around the state to retrofit older buildings, roads and bridges. Nature will decide whether those programs are comprehensive or quick enough to mitigate disasters.

The bottom line: As long as Trump’s base agrees with him that science means less than their own opinions, he will only take advantage of expertise that’s convenient and cheap to follow up on. As Houston and Florida demonstrated, this will very likely mean a lot of unnecessary future deaths and damage.

Thomas D. Elias is a writer in Southern California. tdelias@aol.com

Congress Can Fix Flood Insurance This Year

Bloomberg View

By Sean Duffy, Earl Blumenauer

September 18, 2017

It would be hard to find a more unlikely pair of congressmen than the two of us to find agreement on a highly controversial issue. After working on the complicated issue of flood insurance, however, we've concluded that the way the federal government handles disasters is itself a disaster.

Drastic reform of the National Flood Insurance Program is long overdue. The program now subsidizes insurance for millionaires, puts low-income families in harm's way, and keeps people trapped in vulnerable homes by masking the true risk of flooding. The president and Congress have just extended the program for three months, creating a perfect opportunity for Congress to enact bipartisan reforms.

The NFIP was established nearly 50 years ago for good reason: The private sector had no appetite or capacity to undertake the tremendous and unpredictable risk of flooding. But over the years, the program has been seriously mismanaged. And today, technology has made it easier to manage and predict risks. So it's worth exploring ways to give private insurance companies the incentive to share the financial costs of flood insurance.

Congress has been reluctant to come to the hard decisions needed to make its system actuarially sound. Flood maps that are supposed to assign risk to properties are hopelessly out of date. Many people living in flood-prone neighborhoods continue to receive significant subsidies for their insurance premiums. (Let's not forget that many of these properties are million-dollar homes with gorgeous views of water, which should make the possibility of flooding clear.) We've taken few steps to lower the risk of flood damage. And we've failed to send the right signals to state and local governments to establish sound policies of their own. Essentially, we're hemorrhaging money only to keep people at risk.

Congress will not change this system overnight, but it can start moving in the right direction.

We must deal with the program's debt — now more than \$24 billion — and put it back on a fiscally responsible path. Catastrophic storms aren't entirely to blame for this debt. Highly subsidized premiums do not send the right pricing signals. Annual premiums add up to about \$3.5 billion a year, but program costs run to \$5 billion — even before accounting for catastrophic losses like those from Hurricanes Harvey and Irma. The debt cannot be repaid with premiums alone.

A top priority should be to update all flood maps. It's no use pretending that the facts on the ground haven't changed. With accurate information, property owners and property buyers can better know what risks they face — and local and state governments can better address flooding.

Full actuarial rates for flood insurance premiums should be phased in. We must stop giving subsidies to some property owners and sending misleading signals to all of them. We need to be sensitive to problems this will create for some owners, especially those with low and moderate incomes. But the NFIP's subsidized rates make flood-prone properties more affordable, and we should subsidize only owners who are truly in need.

For the sake of people's health and safety, it's critical that we also stop paying to repeatedly rebuild flood-prone properties. Thousands of Americans are being paid as much as or more than their insured properties

are worth. This threatens the solvency of the flood insurance program, and also keeps people living in dangerous situations with little incentive to better protect their homes or move. Strong flood-proofing standards are needed to see that repeatedly flooded properties are reinforced or elevated. In many cases, flooded homes should be relocated, allowing floodplains to return to their natural state.

Where possible, we have to mitigate flood risk. We save about \$4 for every \$1 spent on mitigation and disaster preparedness. More important, mitigation saves the lives of those who live in harm's way, and those whose job it is to rescue them.

Over the next three months, Congress has a unique opportunity to reform NFIP on a bipartisan, non-ideological basis. Our first job is to help the victims of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, but we must also work to protect potential victims of future floods. Let's all go up to 40,000 feet, look down at the flooding and devastation from Harvey and Irma (and Katrina and Sandy), and act on recommendations that have been on the table for decades. Let's fix the program this time and protect our families.

Social Media

FEMA

- Sentiment towards FEMA is moving towards consistently negative, largely based on frustrations with FEMA Help Line wait times, and perceived long wait times for assistance funds.
- A Houston OEM tweet about more DRCs opening in Houston is being retweeted a significant amount. <https://twitter.com/HoustonOEM/status/910291635229069312>
- A tweet from the FEMA Region 6 twitter account about new DRCs opening also received a large number of retweets. <https://twitter.com/FEMARegion6/status/910274139906244613>

Survivor Sentiment

- Many survivors are expressing frustration with the long help line wait times and hang ups after being on the phone for hours on hold. [Example 1](#) [Example 2](#) [Example 3](#) [Example 4](#)
- [Moderate conversation](#) is surrounding a resident of Rockport who was contacted by a news reporter to be interviewed about her experience with FEMA.
 - She stated that she usually post rants on Facebook about how she believes FEMA is denying everyone who registers with them.
 - She is also looking to refer the reporter to other survivors in the Rockport/Port Aransas area if they are interested.
 - Many survivors are expressing their interest in speaking with the reporter about FEMA.
- Negative sentiment [expressed by a survivor](#) on Facebook awaiting assistance funds

Rumors/Confusion/Frustration

- [A survivor asks on the FEMA National Facebook page](#) about the need for a FEMA rebuild permit in Houston.
- A survivor [says she was approved for CAN](#), but didn't understand how she would receive the funds.

- Survivor [is frustrated with help line wait times](#), but is also now very worried about housing assistance running out soon.
 - Others also are [beginning to post their concern](#) for those worried about getting extensions on temporary housing assistance as they await home inspections.
- The son of an elderly survivor in an apartment building [is posting about the difficulties](#) of an entire building of elderly survivors who have received eviction notices and must vacate the building in 5 days. [Example 2](#)
 - There is also [a link to another facebook post with an article on the subject](#), and that post has a significant number of comments. Only a small number of comments mention FEMA.

Community

- Moderate conversation on a community relief page [surrounds the process for FEMA assistance](#).
 - Some asked what to do if one is rejected for a SBA loan, specifically what's next.
 - A few survivors who have used FEMA for assistance gives their insight on what to do next and how to do.
 - A commenter even refers the others to contact FEMA directly for answers.
- A family currently residing in a hotel paid for by FEMA [has sparked a low conversation](#) in regards to asking others to help them recover from the storm.
 - Most commenters are sending their sympathies.